

AI KHANOUH AND GREEK DOMINATION IN CENTRAL ASIA¹

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Abstract: Ai Khanoum is probably the most important and the best-known of the Greek settlements founded in Bactria by the Seleucid kings. The site was excavated between 1964 and 1978, but its chronology remains unclear. The purpose of this article is to give a more accurate view of its history, taking into account the results of recent research. As yet, we are still unable to date with precision the time of its foundation, which was not a single event but a process, going on for several decades between the time Alexander the Great entered eastern Bactria in spring 328 and the time a true city was planned there under Antiochos I. Nevertheless, the development of Ai Khanoum occurred only from the beginning of the second century BC, when the city had become, along with Bactra, the major city of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. Under the Seleucids as well as the Graeco-Bactrian kings, Ai Khanoum was thus a royal city and its history was subordinate to those of the Greek kings.

Key words: Hellenistic Bactria, Ai Khanoum, Alexander the Great, Seleucid kings, Graeco-Bactrian kings, Greek colonization.

Central Asia was one of the territories conquered by Alexander the Great, leading subsequently to Greek immigration (Fig. 1). After his death, the region was initially incorporated into the Seleucid kingdom, then saw the emergence of independent dynasties that laid claim to Greek culture and exercised characteristically Hellenistic royal power.² Literary sources and numismatics long constituted the only sources of information about its history,³ but they are not sufficiently numerous or comprehensive to allow it to be re-

¹ In this paper, my intention is not to give a veridical historical account – something that is difficult to achieve in general, and even more so with respect to the history of Central Asia – but to present the current state of our knowledge of Ai Khanoum and to formulate a number of hypotheses derivable from this knowledge. Any new discoveries are likely to call them into question. I thank Paul Bernard, Frantz Grenet, Georges Rougemont and Claude Rapin for their always enlightening comments and for their help. But I alone am responsible for the opinions expressed in the paper.

² Coloru 2009 and Widemann 2009, recently published, provide a historical study of Greek ruling dynasties in Bactria.

³ See in particular Coloru 2009, 25–102; Martinez-Sève 2012a, 367–370.



Fig. 1. Map of Hellenistic central Asia (Ancient cities are shown in italics, modern cities are shown in roman, drawing by L. Martinez-Sève)

constructed in detail. Archaeological documentation provides welcome additions, and for the Hellenistic period reveals many settlements inhabited by people who were Greek or were in contact with the Greek world.⁴ One of the most important is Ai Khanoum, located on the current border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan on the left bank of the Darya-i Pandj, at the confluence with the River Kokcha. The site was excavated between 1964 and 1978 by the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan, under the direction of Paul Bernard, and was home to the only truly known city of the Hellenistic era in Central Asia (Fig. 2). Founded in the early third century BC in ancient Bactria, it was occupied by settlers from more western regions. For nearly a hundred and fifty years their descendants

⁴ Leriche 2007, 130–134, for an account of the Greek occupation of Bactria, see also Ball 1982; Košelenko 1985, 204–350; Cohen 2013.



Fig. 2. Plan of Ai Khanoum (drawing by J. Liger and G. Lecuyot)

perpetuated traditions strongly influenced by Greek culture, before being forced to leave the city around 145 BC under the combined pressure of nomads and local people, and withdrawing to areas south of the Hindu Kush. Ai Khanoum was also a royal residence. Its history is therefore particularly revealing with regard to Greek administration in the region, and sheds light on the development of Greek domination, which had three main stages in Central Asia. The first was Alexander the Great's expedition, which proceeded through Bactria and Sogdiana from spring 329 to spring 327, subsequently reaching as far as the Indus Valley. It was during this period that Central Asia fully entered the Greek world. Then, after Alexander's death in June 323, everything had to be rebuilt, a task that was implemented by the Seleucid kings, Alexander's successors, from 305. Thus began the second stage, covering the first half and the beginning of the second half of the third century. Their power, however, was increasingly challenged by Diodotus, the governor

who represented them in Bactria and who created the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom between 250 and 235 BC. The third stage was characterised by the domination of the Graeco-Bactrian kings. They survived until about 145 BC in the areas north of the Hindu Kush, even though they were sometimes involved in the dynastic rivalries that resulted in the break-up of their kingdom into a number of principalities. After 145, they fell back to the south of this mountain range, to Arachosia and the region of Kabul, as well as the territories of the Punjab they had conquered from the early second century BC.

1. The plain of Ai Khanoum at the time of Alexander

The discovery of Ai Khanoum in 1961 during a hunting expedition by the king of Afghanistan, and the results of the excavations started in 1964, were so remarkable that it is sometimes forgotten that the city was built on a territory that already had its own history, extending over several millennia.⁵ The choice of location was not made at random. It is often pointed out, rightly, that this city occupied a commanding position that controlled several strategic routes. It was situated at the southwest corner of a fertile plain of roughly triangular shape, covering an area of 300 square kilometres, and bordered by the Darya-i Pandj to the west, the Kokcha to the south, and to the east by a line of hills leading to the Darya-i Pandj. The plain was the richest in the area and the last before the highlands of the eastern Hindu Kush and the Pamirs.⁶ It commanded access to the valleys of the Kokcha and of the Kizil Su, a tributary on the right bank that flows into the Darya-i Pandj ten kilometres upstream of Ai Khanoum. The Kokcha valley led to the Badakhshan heights and its garnet and especially lapis lazuli mines,⁷ whose riches were exploited from the third millennium BC. The Kizil Su valley gave access to the present region of Kuliab in Tajikistan, and from there to the various routes leading to the ranges of the Western Pamirs, an area rich in minerals and precious and semi-precious stones, and beyond to what eventually became Chinese Turkestan.⁸ The city was at a crossroads of regional and inter-regional communications, used by merchants as well as by nomadic and mountain populations, who were at once partners and potential adversaries needing to be watched.⁹ The Kizil Su valley thus formed the first potential invasion corridor once the mountains were crossed via the upper Wakhsh Valley. The plain was under cultivation from the third millennium, an era during which the first parts of a major irrigation network were dug, and continued to be extended thereafter. The evolution of its occupation is known to us through the work of a team of researchers, archaeologists, ceramologists and geographers, under the leadership of Jean-Claude Gardin, who prospected the area from 1974 to 1976 before exploring the neighbouring regions in 1977 and 1978.¹⁰

⁵ On what follows, see also Mairs 2014.

⁶ Gardin/Gentelle 1976, 63–65; Gentelle 1978.

⁷ Bernard 1978a.

⁸ However, there is no evidence that contact existed at that time between the regions on either side of the Pamirs.

⁹ Bernard 1978b, 14–15.

¹⁰ Gardin/Gentelle 1976; Gentelle 1989; Lyonnet 1997; Gardin 1998.

The foundation of Ai Khanoum was certainly an important event in the history of this region, even though it occurred relatively late. The first major settlement on the plain, excavated under the direction of Henri-Paul Francfort, was Shortugai, located about 20 kilometres north of Ai Khanoum.¹¹ As well as farming, its inhabitants engaged in artisanal activities and trade in metals (such as gold, copper and lead) and semi-precious stones including lapis lazuli. Shortugai maintained close links with settlements in the Indus Valley, either because it was something of a colony founded by settlers from there, or because it was part of a broad cultural area defined by shared characteristics of the Indus civilisation. The site existed for several centuries in the second half of the third millennium and in the early part of the second millennium BC, when it underwent a phase of autonomous, and more specifically Bactrian, development. The irrigation system was further developed during the second half of the second and the first half of the first millennium, so that when the Greeks arrived, most of the fertile lands were already supplied with water. Two large main canals were fed from the upstream Kokcha and then flowed northward, against the prevailing slope of the land, an achievement that reflects the expertise of the Bactrian engineers. The Greeks then exploited this mastery of hydraulic techniques and completed the cultivation of the plain: a third canal was dug at the foot of the eastern hills, extending to the land furthest away from the course of the rivers. Between the middle of the third millennium and the last centuries BC, the plain of Ai Khanoum thus continued to grow in population and to develop, and the Greeks simply contributed to this process of expansion that had existed before their arrival.

Establishing a major town at Ai Khanoum, which could benefit from the various resources of the plain and its surroundings, was therefore particularly tempting for a political power. The site also enjoyed considerable defensive strengths. It was naturally protected by the Kokcha and Darya-i Pandj rivers and by a 60-metre tabular acropolis that dominated the plain. These three features defined a large triangular area, in which a substantial population could be housed. But the date of the founding of the city is not easy to determine with any certainty.¹² Although the plain had been cultivated since the third millennium, it seems not to have had any real cities prior to Ai Khanoum, since Shortugai cannot be accorded such a status. Ai Khanoum appears to have been founded in the Hellenistic period, on a site that had not been occupied on a large scale before the arrival of the Greeks, even under the Achaemenids, who were the first to develop an extensive and relatively organised state infrastructure in Bactria and Sogdiana, as the recently published archives of the satrap of Bactra (modern Balkh) reveal.¹³ This infrastructure rested on a number of important settlements, including Cheshme Shafa,¹⁴ situated 30 kilometres south of Bactra, and Kok Tepe,¹⁵ 30 kilometres north of Samarkand, both of them recently discovered. There is no doubt now that the Achaemenid kings firmly held these regions, and it seems unlikely in these circumstances that the plain of Ai Khanoum and its resources escaped their control, or at least their knowledge. Moreover, some finds from Ai Khanoum lie within the Achaemenid artistic tradition, such as

¹¹ Francfort 1989.

¹² Cohen 2013, 231–232.

¹³ Naveh/Shaked 2012, 22–33.

¹⁴ Besenval/Marquis 2008, 982–987; Besenval/Engel/Marquis 2011, 181–184.

¹⁵ Rapin 2007.

a number of torus column bases, a bell-shaped base found in the palace, and stoneware, seals and intaglios.¹⁶ Some of the ceramic artefacts of the third century are no different from those of previous centuries.¹⁷ The layout of certain public buildings also seemed inspired by Achaemenid models, particularly the palace.¹⁸ The hypothesis that the site was occupied from the Achaemenid period has therefore been considered.¹⁹ But no archaeological layers from that time have ever been found, and the deeper levels already contained material attributed to the Greeks. The oldest structures are both buildings, one buried under the eastern wall of the citadel and the other at the outside base of the north wall of the lower town. Both were constructed from large mud-bricks, the calibre of which seems to be typical of the Achaemenid period.²⁰ But it is possible that they were built at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, in accordance with traditional standards and at a time when the characteristic architectural traditions of the Greeks had not yet developed. We now know that these Achaemenid influences are accounted for mainly by the persistence of older artistic and technical traditions during the Hellenistic period.²¹ If Ai Khanoum was occupied during the Achaemenid period, it was thus more likely by a garrison, stationed on the citadel. Indeed, use was probably made of the defensive strengths of the site and its acropolis use before the arrival of the Greeks. Moreover, its indigenous name was perhaps *Oskobara, a toponym which can be understood as signifying “the high fortress.”²² The largest site was at the time situated 1.5 kilometres upstream at Kohna Qala, from where the Achaemenid authority probably exercised its control over the plain. Covering an area of about 25 hectares, semi-circular in layout and protected by two lines of ramparts, it was located near the main crossing point of the Darya-i Pandj, thus allowing the river to be kept under surveillance. The site has not been excavated, but from the surface material it seems to have been occupied from the Achaemenid period up until the eighth century AD.²³

It is thus still currently believed that the city of Ai Khanoum was founded by the Graeco-Macedonians. This event had considerable impact on the history of the plain and its occupants. The function of the site changed, from a simple military post to a major city. The transformation was the result of a political decision, motivated by considerations pertaining not solely to the local plain, which formed the territory of the new city, but to the whole of Bactria. Yet the question of who made the decision remains unresolved. Alexander the Great, who is considered one of the great city founders of antiquity, seems to be the ideal candidate. But another is Seleucus I, who also founded numerous colonies and was very active in Central Asia. Both possibilities have been considered, without any definite conclusions being reached.²⁴ Upon arrival in Bactria

¹⁶ Bernard 1970, 333–334; Bernard *et al.* 1973, 28, 119–120; Francfort 2005, 336, 338, 340; Francfort 2013a, 24–37, 41–50, 59–64, 97–101.

¹⁷ Lyonnet 2001, 142; Lyonnet 2012, 147–155.

¹⁸ Bernard 1976a, 252–257; Rapin 1992, 272–278. See also Lecuyot 2013, 201–207 for the great aristocratic residences.

¹⁹ For example Francfort 2005, 338.

²⁰ Leriche 1986, 21, 44, 71–72.

²¹ Francfort 2013a.

²² Rapin 2005, 146–147.

²³ Bernard 1978b, 15; Gardin 1998, 42, 45–46.

²⁴ Particularly Bernard 1978b, 12–15.

in 329, Alexander met with unanimous opposition from the local population. He had to contend with guerrilla operations, led in Bactria and Sogdiana by aristocrats who possessed castles and private armies and had no intention of giving up their privileges. To defeat them, Alexander responded blow for blow to the attacks, not hesitating to use violence to terrorise the population and get them to submit. He overcame the remaining pockets of resistance by dividing his army into a number of contingents, under the command of those who were close to him, whose task it was to go up the valleys, carry out reconnaissance and crush any opposition. He also established a network of foundations designed to secure his control of the region, in which he installed mercenaries and demobilised veterans and wounded soldiers unable to campaign. These foundations were of two kinds. Some were destined to become towns, bearing the name of Alexandria. These would be the key points of the network and would serve as a home to the regional administration. Bactra, the main Achaemenid capital, nonetheless retained its name. The rest were simple forts and guard posts, where large military forces were stationed. Alexander left the region without having managed to pacify and take complete control of it, but his strategy was probably continued.²⁵

It is unlikely that Ai Khanoum remained on the side-lines of operations. Both the site and the already cultivated plain were probably visited by the Greek armies. Alexander took control of the Achaemenid administration and benefited from the knowledge that it had accumulated. He found out about the location of the richest valleys and oases in the region, and of the access routes he needed to keep under observation and defend. Even if we can rely solely on the argument of plausibility, everything that is known about Alexander's personality and political and military capabilities suggests that he or one of his generals took possession of the plain of Ai Khanoum and left men there.²⁶ He was thus able to build one of his many Alexandrias, the list of which tradition has preserved for us. It is also sometimes suggested that Ai Khanoum was in fact Alexandria Oxiana, mentioned by Ptolemy (6.12.6).²⁷

The date when Alexander's army entered eastern Bactria can be specified thanks to the Historians of Alexander, who provide a relatively detailed account of the operations in Bactria and Sogdiana between 329 and 327, particularly Quintus Curtius (6.2.12–8.8.23) and Arrian (*Anab.* 3.23–4.22.2), among others. But their accounts leave a considerable amount of uncertainty and raise many questions when one tries to pinpoint the localities and features of the landscape they refer to. Efforts have nonetheless been made to identify them and to trace the routes taken, and several studies based on field work have recently been published.²⁸ Given the timing of the campaigns of Alexander and his army, it is most likely that they operated in eastern Bactria in the spring of 328. What follows is the reconstruction proposed by Claude Rapin (Fig. 3).²⁹ After leaving Bactra (Balkh), Al-

²⁵ For Alexander's strategy: Holt 1989, 52–69; Bosworth 1993, 104–119; Briant 2002, 50–55; Martinez-Sève 2012a, 371–375.

²⁶ Bernard 1982, 135–136.

²⁷ Bernard 1978b, 3–15. Lastly Cohen 2013, 269–271 with all previous references, including Fraser 1996, 153–156.

²⁸ The most comprehensive analysis is now Rapin 2013. Cf. also Grenet/Rapin 2001; Rapin *et al.* 2005, and Sverchkov 2008.

²⁹ Rapin 2013, 46–54.

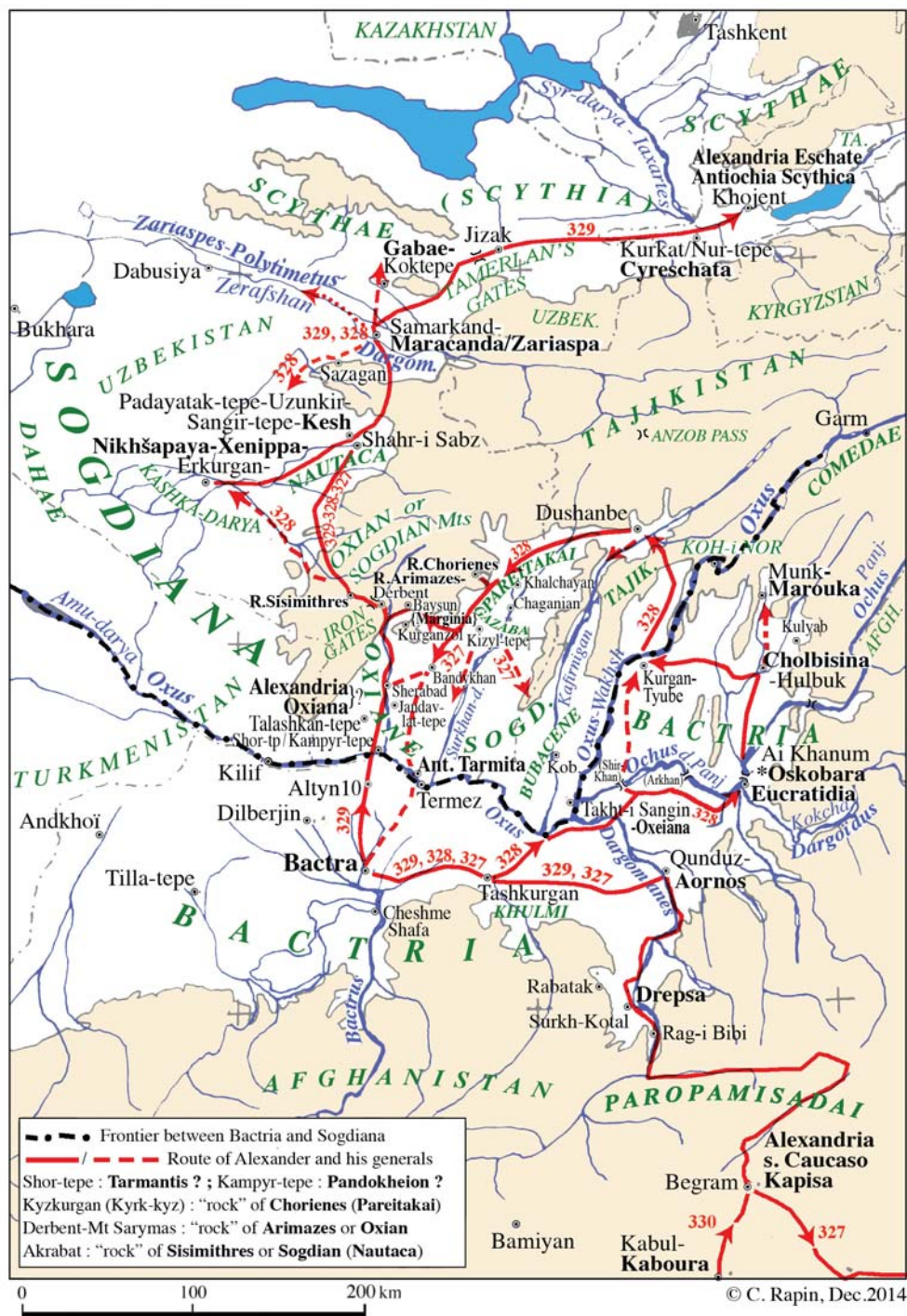


Fig. 3. Map of Hellenistic Central Asia with the route taken by Alexander the Great in 329–327 BC according to Rapin 2013 (drawing by Cl. Rapin)

alexander first went in the opposite direction along the route he had taken into Bactria the previous year, then reached the banks of the Oxus. After that, he first crossed the River Ochus, then the Oxus itself,³⁰ and continued by marching into Sogdiana. Gradually, as he progressed, he divided his army into different contingents that he dispatched to operate in adjoining areas. Polyperchon, Attalus, Gorgias and Meleager were the commanders detached to intervene in the oases of eastern Bactria, and probably in the plain of Ai Khanoum as well. Alexander himself may have gone there if he used the Kohna Qala ford to cross the Darya-i Pandj, as this was the River Ochus. It is often assumed that this was the Oxus, as it forms the headwaters of the Amu Darya, which was unquestionably the Oxus of the ancient Greeks. In actual fact, the headwaters of the Oxus coincide with the present-day Wakhsh, a river in Tajikistan that flows into the Amu Darya at the point where the great sanctuary of Takht-i Sangin stood, consecrated to the god Oxus, a hundred kilometres downstream of Ai Khanoum. The name Oxus is, moreover, retained in the name Wakhsh, derived directly from the old Iranian *Waxšu-*, which designated the Oxus and was transcribed by the Greek Ὠξός.³¹ On the other hand, the Greek Ὠχός corresponds to the Iranian *Wahu-* and the modern name of Wakh, which was sometimes used to designate the Darya-i Pandj, including by the Arab geographer Ibn Rustah, active in the early tenth century.³² Thus Alexander crossed first the Daria-i Pandj/Ochus and then the Wakhsh/Oxus. If an Alexandria was founded on the site of Ai Khanoum, therefore, there is little chance that it was the Alexandria Oxiana of the literary tradition. The qualifier indicates that this Alexandria was situated on the banks of the Oxus, which was not the case for Ai Khanoum. Of the other Alexandrias in Central Asia whose names have been preserved, none are located in the region, with the exception of an Alexandria near Bactra (κατὰ Βάκτρα) cited by Stephenus of Byzantium (under the word *Alexandreia* 11). Its existence remains doubtful, and in any case its location hardly seems suitable for Ai Khanoum, which is located about 300 kilometres to the east of Bactra.³³

Therefore, the available information suggests that Alexander took the plain of Ai Khanoum, but rather than founding a city there, he left troops stationed in Kohna Qala and the acropolis of Ai Khanoum. If this hypothesis is correct, it may be concluded that he simply took over the system of domination established by the Achaemenids. None of the ruins at Ai Khanoum known at present indicate that Alexander undertook the building of a proper city, or even that he planned to do so. Elsewhere in Bactria and Sogdiana, it has been possible to demonstrate the presence of ceramic assemblages characteristic of the period running from the reign of Alexander to the beginning of the reign of Antiochus I, the period of transition between the Achaemenid and Hellenistic eras. They may be seen at Maracanda and Kok Tepe,³⁴ as well as Kurganzol, a fort built by the Macedo-

³⁰ Quintus Curtius 7.10.13–15; the Metz Epitome, 14.

³¹ Grenet/Rapin 2001, 80.

³² Ed. M.J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Araborum*, vol. 7 (Leiden 1892), 93. Cf. Grenet/Rapin 2001, 80, for a translation of the text and additional references. This proposal is also based on the new interpretation of the Ptolemy map suggested by Rapin (2001).

³³ Cohen 2013, 262. One of the contributions of P.M. Fraser's book (Fraser 1996, 153–154 for this Alexandria) was, moreover, to show that a large number of unwarranted foundations had been attributed to Alexander by virtue of his reputation as a founder. Cf. also Rapin 2005, 147–148 for the identification of Alexander's foundations.

³⁴ Lyonnet 2012, 167–169; Lyonnet 2013a, 364–365.

nian king near the present city of Baysun to monitor a crossing point of the mountains of Hissar, which separated the Surkhan Darya and Kashka Darya valleys, on one of the roads leading from Bactra to Maracanda.³⁵ But these ceramic assemblages have not been found at Ai Khanoum. This absence does not imply that the site was then unoccupied; if Graeco-Macedonians did live there, though, they were not sufficiently numerous to leave substantial traces. They were probably stationed on the citadel, where the deeper layers were reached only over very limited areas.

2. The city of Ai Khanoum, a largely unknown Seleucid foundation

Following the death of Alexander, Central Asia was not one of the main theatres in the conflict that erupted among his Friends, eager to assume his mantle, and it remained a peripheral region. Around 315, the political and military infrastructure he had set up still existed, particularly because the Diadochi – and especially Antigonos Monophthalmus – had not succeeded in eliminating Alexander's former satraps.³⁶ The Greek presence had then been weakened by the departure or death of many soldiers and settlers. After 323, many of them revolted and departed from this region, viewed by the Greeks as a distant and hostile land, where Achaemenid kings deported their opponents. They were slain by an army sent to suppress them.³⁷ In addition, the hostility of the local population had not abated. It is not certain whether the contingent possibly left at Ai Khanoum could have managed to maintain its presence there. But around 306–305, a new expedition was successfully led into Central Asia by Seleucus, who had already established control over Iran and Babylonia. Shortly afterwards, in 305, he adopted the royal title and founded the Seleucid kingdom. Although we have no definite knowledge of the campaigns he conducted, it is likely that he fought against the local population, as well as against adventurers and former satraps who had subjected to their control the remnants of Alexander's army and settlers. A certain Sophytos minted coins in his own name in a Bactrian workshop with his portrait, which was particularly innovative.³⁸ Oxyartes, the father of Roxanne, whom his son-in-law Alexander had made responsible for controlling the Paropamisadae, may also have issued coins in his name, along with other satraps such as Stasanor.³⁹ It is not surprising that these men invested with military commands operated in this manner, since the authorities they were supposed to be subordinate to were distant and in disarray. Seleucus managed to re-establish Graeco-Macedonian rule in Bactria,⁴⁰ and took energetic measures to strengthen his power. From 294, his oldest

³⁵ On Kurganzol in general, cf. Sverchkov 2008.

³⁶ Olbrycht 2013, 161–168.

³⁷ Diodorus 17.99.5–6; Quintus Curtius 9.7.1–11 (first revolt of 325) and Diodorus 18.7 (revolt of 323). Cf. Bernard 1985a, 127–128; Holt 1989, 82–86; Coloru 2009, 130–134; Martinez-Sève 2012a, 374–375.

³⁸ Bopearachchi 2006.

³⁹ Košelenko 2006 and Atakhodjaev 2013, 220–222. The name stamped on coins attributed to Oxyartes is Vakhshuvar. It refers to Wakhsku, the Oxus of the Greeks, as we have seen previously. The name Oxyartes thus corresponds to its Greek form.

⁴⁰ According to Capdetrey (2007, 42–43), he mostly succeeded in obtaining the allegiance of the local satraps and dynasts, who held the real power.

son Antiochus was appointed co-regent and made responsible for governing the eastern part of the kingdom. He remained in Central Asia, where he rebuilt an administrative and military structure inspired by what Alexander the Great had put in place.⁴¹ Antiochus benefited from support in Bactria, where he also had interests and kin, as he was Bactrian through his mother Apama, the daughter of Spitamenes, who had been one of Alexander's main adversaries. Seleucus had married her in Susa in 324, at the same time as Alexander and his other generals had also married Iranian princesses. Apama was not repudiated by Seleucus, and occupied an important position at the Seleucid court. Antiochus conducted reconnaissance operations in Caspian through Patroclus, one of his top generals,⁴² and beyond the Syr Darya through Demodamas, a general of Milesian origin.⁴³ It is also believed that he recovered some of Alexander's colonies that had collapsed or been attacked. Pliny (*HN* 6.46–48) refers to Antioch in Margiana, which would have succeeded an Alexandria in Margiana – whose existence nonetheless seems very doubtful⁴⁴ – as well as to the refounding of one of Alexander's former colonies, known as Heracleia or Achai.⁴⁵ W.W. Tarn also speculated that Alexandria Eschata met the same fate: Demodamas would have refounded it during his operations in an Antioch of Scythia, attested to in Stephanus of Byzantium (s.v. *Antiocheia* 10).⁴⁶ We do not have any evidence to support these claims, and it is therefore important to be cautious.⁴⁷ But the fact remains that the Seleucids' involvement was extensive. This policy was expensive, obliging the kings to mint large amounts of coinage.⁴⁸ This development was significant for the region, which had never before encountered locally produced coinage, even at the time of Alexander, who had never set up a mint there.⁴⁹ The Seleucids recreated a network of establishments, many of them small forts and places to station garrisons,⁵⁰ among which the one at Kurganzol, for example, remained functioning. They also founded more sizable centres, including Antioch in Margiana, which was probably located on the site of the present-day Gyaur Kala in the oasis of Merv, about 30 kilometres east of the modern town of Mary.⁵¹ Contrary to what has sometimes been believed, they also endeavoured to securely hold Sogdiana and Maracanda (Samarkand), where bronze and silver coins issued by Seleucus I and Antiochus I were in circulation.⁵² Thus, we have to examine

⁴¹ Bernard 1985, 38–39; Holt 1999, 21–29; Capdetrey 2007, 79–81; Martinez-Sève 2012a, 375–376.

⁴² Strabo 11.7.3, 11.11.5 (Patroclus had left an account of this expedition, and it is in this context that he is mentioned by Strabo); Pliny, *HN* 6.58.

⁴³ Pliny, *HN* 6.49.

⁴⁴ Fraser 1996, 31, 117–118; Cohen 2013, 244–247.

⁴⁵ Cohen 2013, 274–276.

⁴⁶ Tarn 1985, 83, note 3. An Alexandreschata of Scythia is also designated by Appian (*Syr.* 57) as one of the foundations of Seleucus I. Cf. Cohen 2013, 252–255.

⁴⁷ Fraser 1996, 34–40.

⁴⁸ Holt 1999, 29–37; Houghton/Lorber 2002, 99–103, no. 257–303 for Bactria alone, but see pp. 88–304 for the whole of Central Asia.

⁴⁹ Bopearachchi 2004.

⁵⁰ Martinez-Sève 2012a, 376.

⁵¹ Cohen 2013, 245–250. Its impressive upper storey ramparts are especially known for the Hellenistic period: Zavyalov 2007.

⁵² Atakhodjaev 2013. A workshop there may have minted small-denomination coins under a king Antiochus, probably Antiochus I (cf. note 65 in Atakhodjaev 2013).

the situation of Ai Khanoum under the first Seleucids, taking into account this particular historical and political context.

None of the monuments excavated in the city date back to the reign of Seleucus I, and, as we have seen, the oldest ceramic assemblages date from the reign of Antiochus I at the earliest. The same goes for the buildings.⁵³ It is certain that the shrine near the main street, which later housed the temple with indented recesses, was built under Antiochus I.⁵⁴ The Heroon of Kineas and the first ramparts are likely to have been constructed at roughly the same time.⁵⁵ Based on what we know at present, it thus seems that the Greeks moved there in stages and that the development of the city proper occurred no earlier than the personal reign of Antiochus I (281–261 BC). This installation process must have been accompanied by a royal deed of foundation, but it is not possible to say when, and these events remain very imprecise. Only epigraphic documents could allow the modalities and stages of the foundation of Ai Khanoum to be determined, and these are lacking. All we can be sure about is the time when enough Greeks were living in Ai Khanoum to leave substantial traces. There was apparently a change of scale under Antiochus I, an occurrence that gives rise to various questions, because Seleucid power was established in Central Asia as early as the reign of Seleucus I. It possibly took some time to do what was needed for the Seleucids to secure their presence in Ai Khanoum. Perhaps they also devoted their early efforts to other parts of central Asia, while retaining for the plain of Ai Khanoum a system based on what had been introduced by Alexander and simply installing troops there.

A notable shift nevertheless seems to have occurred at the time of the co-regency, with substantial changes to the status of Ai Khanoum. According to Brian Kritt, a mint was opened there in the last years of co-regency, after 285, and produced bronze and silver coinage.⁵⁶ He argues that the coinage which E.T. Newell⁵⁷ previously attributed to the Bactra mint was in fact produced in Ai Khanoum, basing his argument on a very thorough technical study and the fact that these coins bore as a monogram a sign also found stamped on baked bricks used in the masonry of the oldest tomb of the Heroon of Kineas.⁵⁸ Another of these bricks was discovered within the floor of a building in the east wing of the Seleucid sanctuary. Paul Bernard had already emphasised this fact, and he too considered – before rejecting – the hypothesis that coins with this monogram should be reattributed to Ai Khanoum. If accepted, this would have resulted in removing from Bactra most of the Bactrian coinage struck under not only Seleucus I, but also Antiochus I. The coinage of Antiochus I cannot in fact be separated from his father's, with which it forms a homogeneous whole. Bernard therefore preferred to retain the

⁵³ Martinez-Sève 2013a, 214–215; Martinez-Sève 2014, 270.

⁵⁴ The temple with indented recesses was built in the time of Diodotus I or Diodotus II during the foundation of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, or soon after. He had a predecessor in the Seleucid era, which was then levelled (Martinez-Sève 2010).

⁵⁵ See below.

⁵⁶ Kritt 1996. These currencies are referenced in Houghton/Lorber 2002, 103–107, no. 276–290. Both authors initially accepted Kritt's proposals, but then rather reconsidered their position and became more cautious (Houghton/Lorber/Hoover 2008, 643).

⁵⁷ Newell 1978. Note that the first edition of this study was published in 1938; the author therefore did not know of the existence of Ai Khanoum.

⁵⁸ Bernard *et al.* 1973, 9, 88.

attribution to Bactra, maintaining that the main Bactrian workshop could not be anywhere else than in the region's capital city.⁵⁹ For a long time, the idea prevailed that each Seleucid satrapy possessed a mint that issued coins for the needs of the area. Recent work has shown the situation to have been more complex. The Seleucids minted coins on an irregular basis to meet specific needs, but not to supply monetary circulation on the scale of a given region. The latter requirement was mainly met by coinage of very varied origins, which circulated throughout the kingdom. The Seleucids also struck coins when they were short of currency, most of which typically consisted of money obtained through various levies. If workshops of regional scope did exist, it was not the general rule, and other mints were opened when the need arose.⁶⁰ Furthermore, our conception of the organisation of the Seleucid kingdom has also been refined, and the very idea of a capital is open to question. The Seleucid kingdom was not a modern state governed from a single capital city, any more than the various satrapies were truly administrative districts governed solely from satrapy capitals. The kingdom was more an area where royal power was deployed through a network of establishments in which armed forces and administrators were stationed. This network was hierarchical, variously comprising the ancient indigenous royal cities, new foundations, secondary urban settlements and simple guard posts. It is unlikely that the region of Bactria was a uniform space for the Seleucids, administered from Bactra alone, although it was the largest city in the region and the seat of the satrap who represented them.⁶¹ The impossibility of placing Bactria's main Seleucid mint in Ai Khanoum nonetheless constitutes the main argument mounted in opposition to Kritt.⁶² As long as his technical arguments are not invalidated, his hypothesis remains sound. Let us look at it in more detail.

In Kritt's opinion, the Seleucids began by setting up a mint in Bactra that was in operation for six to eight years during the co-regency of Antiochus I. Its first coins were struck between 290 and 286 BC.⁶³ After 285, probably in the latter years of the co-regency, a second mint was opened in Ai Khanoum under the supervision of a monetary magistrate transferred from Bactra, with some coins from Ai Khanoum bearing his control mark. The Bactra mint ceased operations at the beginning of the reign of Antiochus I, whereas the one at Ai Khanoum issued coinage for the duration of the Seleucid presence in Bactria. Kritt explains this transfer through the fact that the mines were closer to Ai Khanoum and that sourcing the metal was easier. In particular he maintains that it was at this time that the city of Ai Khanoum was founded, under the authority of Antiochus.⁶⁴ Even though the oldest known remains date back to the reign of Antiochus I, it can be

⁵⁹ Bernard 1985b, 39.

⁶⁰ These points clearly emerge from Houghton/Lorber 2002 and Houghton/Lorber/Hoover 2008. See also Aperghis 2004, 213–246 and Martinez-Sève 2012b for further references.

⁶¹ Capdetrey 2007, 69–72, 359–383 and Capdetrey 2012. Cf. also Martinez-Sève 2003, 232–234; Martinez-Sève 2004, 22–32; Martinez-Sève 2012b, 217–219 (for the example of Bactria).

⁶² Notably by Osmund Bopearachchi: 1999 and 2004. See Kritt's response in Kritt 2001, 167–183.

⁶³ In Kritt 1997, 65, 106–108, the suggested date is 288/287, i.e. when, in Kritt's view, Antiochus I would have arrived in Bactria after first staying at Seleucia and then Susa. Kritt attributes a set of silver and bronze coins to the Bactra mint, which were originally, but wrongly, thought to have been issued in Susa (Houghton/Lorber 2002, 99–102, no. 257–271).

⁶⁴ Kritt 1996, 31–34. According to Kritt, Ai Khanoum did not replace Bactra as the capital of Bactria because it was too far away from the centre (on the idea of capital city, see above).

agreed that the first operations related to the founding of the city began from the time of the co-regency, when the first settlers arrived. The transfer of the mint in any case reflects a shift in the Seleucids' focus of interest to eastern Bactria, which took on a new importance. It is probable from this time onwards that the Seleucids decided to organise the control of Bactria through two main urban centres, Bactra in western Bactria and Ai Khanoum in eastern Bactria.⁶⁵ From this point, their area of control was to extend northward to the Kuliab region in Tajikistan and to the Kizil Su Valley, and perhaps westward to Kunduz, the former Aornos. This situation is more evident in the Graeco-Bactrian era,⁶⁶ but it was probably inherited from the co-regency of Antiochus, which shaped the contours of Greek power in Central Asia.⁶⁷ Their larger investment in eastern Bactria forced the Seleucids to make a financial effort that was all the greater because this region had no monetary tradition and must have had very little money in circulation. They were thus obliged to mint large amounts of coinage to finance the founding of the colony and to pay the military, which were probably stationed in greater numbers than hitherto. The name of the new city is not known, but it was probably a Seleucid dynastic name, as with all other Seleucid foundations comparable in size to Ai Khanoum. Tradition has retained the names of the two Antiochs in Central Asia mentioned above: Antioch in Margiana and Antioch in Scythia. But no texts mention an Antioch, a Seleucia or an Apamea in Bactria or on the Ochos. This absence is not altogether surprising, and no hasty conclusions should be drawn from it. Several Seleucid foundations are known only through epigraphic documents and were not mentioned by the authors of antiquity, for example Seleucia on the Eulaios, on the site of the former Susa, or Antioch in Persis and Seleucia on the Erythrean Sea, both located near the Persian Gulf.⁶⁸ Few epigraphic documents have been found in Central Asia, and most of those that have been found are private in nature and make no mention of a city. Further discoveries will be needed to make progress in this respect.

Of the various monuments in Ai Khanoum, the Heroon of Kineas is the only one associated with the first settlers. It was built in the centre of the lower town to house the remains of this individual, whose name is well attested to in Thessaly. The identification of this building is not in doubt, thanks to an inscription made by one Clearchus, which states that the monument was a place of worship dedicated to Kineas: Clearchus refers to the *temenos* of Kineas. He had erected a stele there bearing a set of maxims, some of which, owing to a lack of space, were engraved on the base itself.⁶⁹ It is considered

⁶⁵ On this point, cf. Leriche 2007, 130–134.

⁶⁶ See below.

⁶⁷ Rapin also stresses the advantageous position of Ai Khanoum in an area that in his view extended from the Wakhsh valley to the Kunduz region, but had already formed in the Achaemenid period (Rapin 2013, 48–49).

⁶⁸ Seleucia on the Eulaios is mentioned in several inscriptions found in Susa (Rougemont 2012, no. 13, 14, 17?, 19, 20?, 23?, 33?) as well as in the acceptance decree of the *Leukophryena* of Magnesia on the Maeander by Antioch of Persis (Rougemont 2012, no. 53). Antioch of Persis is known through this document, as is Seleucia on the Erythrean Sea.

⁶⁹ Rougemont 2012, 200–209, no. 97 (first edition of the text: Robert 1968). The base bore Clearchus's dedication in verse: Ἀνδρῶν τοι σοφὰ ταῦτα παλαιότερων ἀνάκει[τ]αι / ῥήματα ἀριγνώτων Πυθοῖ ἐν ἡγαθέαι / ἔνθεν ταῦτ[α] Κλέαρχος ἐπιπροδέως ἀναγράψας / εἴσατο τηλαυγῇ Κινέου ἐν τεμένει (*The wise words of men of old, words of celebrated men / are set up in most holy Pytho / From there Clearchus copied them meticu-*

that Kineas was the Seleucid officer responsible for founding the colony, though Antiochus would have been able to go there himself had he been in Bactria. Kineas probably belonged to the first generation of settlers living in the city, where he was to die. His body was placed in a sarcophagus inside the tomb;⁷⁰ it was thus not simply a cenotaph. Kineas was nevertheless considered to be the founder of the city, the only assumption that accounts for the fact that he was worshipped and interred in his own mausoleum.⁷¹ Therefore it was he who specifically organised the settling of the city and was the main representative of Seleucid power. These first settlers lived in temporary buildings, of which nothing remains, except possibly an initial defensive wall located at the site of the future north rampart.⁷²

The momentum generated by Antiochus while co-regent did not stop when he became king in 281. It was in fact at this point that Ai Khanoum really began to exist as a city. Conceived as a royal city, it embodied the power of the sovereigns who ruled over it. On the death of Seleucus I, Antiochus was either in Babylonia or, more probably, in Central Asia. He was obliged to make his way quickly to Asia Minor and contend with various problems there, and subsequently spent long periods in the western parts of the kingdom.⁷³ It is not even certain that he ever returned to Central Asia, though that did not prevent his administration continuing to consolidate Seleucid domination there. This policy came at a cost, and large amounts of coinage were minted. Nearly a third of the bronze coins found at Ai Khanoum were issued in this period,⁷⁴ testifying not only to continuing royal investment but very much to its amplification. It was at this time that the city took its initial form. The oldest constructions are, as we have seen, the sanctuary, the Heroon of Kineas, and probably the ramparts, which all had a utilitarian and a symbolic function. The ramparts functioned as a defence, but also defined and enclosed the urban space, the future expansion of which was foreseen, while concretely expressing the power of newcomers. The total area was very large (about 150 hectares), and even though it was customary to keep non-built-up spaces so as to allow people in the surrounding area to fall back in the event of danger and to have arable land in the event prolonged siege, it is evident that the construction of a major city was planned from the outset. There was also a concern to install the settlers' gods as guarantors of their safety and their future, and to pay tribute to the founder, who had died in the meantime. The main street was laid out at the same time as the sanctuary, at least in its surroundings, suggesting that the general plan of the city was conceived during this period. Considerable work was undertaken, an indication of royal involvement. The sanctuary was built on an intermedi-

lously / and had them drawn up, brilliant from afar, in the temenos of Kineas, trad. Lerner 2003/2004). The last five lines of maxims remained on the base, and two other very fragmentary lines were found on the fragment of the lower left corner of the stele, the only one preserved: Παῖς ὦν κόσμιος γίνου / ἡβῶν ἐγκρατῆς / μέσος δίκαιος / πρεσβύτης εὐβουλός / τελευτῶν ἄλπος and on the fragment εἰλόγει πάντας] / φιλόσοφος γίνου] (*In childhood, be well behaved / in youth, have self-control / in middle age, behave justly / in old age, be of wise counsel / in death, be without sorrow*, trad. Lerner 2003/2004).

⁷⁰ Bernard *et al.* 1973, 87–88.

⁷¹ This hypothesis is, for example, accepted by Fröhlich 2013, 245–247.

⁷² Leriche 1986, 52, 72.

⁷³ For the chronology of the reign of Antiochus I, cf. Will 1979, 135–152.

⁷⁴ Bernard 1985, 7 (the coins found in hoards are excluded from this count). Some of these coins were still in circulation during the second century BC.

ate terrace between the upper town and the palace area stretching out below. Its layout was remodelled before the construction of the religious complex: in some places, some of the natural land was removed, while in others the surface was raised by a thick layer of fluvial pebbles. The slopes forming the edge of the terrace were also equalised. These operations were dated from a coin of Antiochus I,⁷⁵ buried under pebbles a metre thick, which constitutes a chronological milestone of major importance. Through it we can date the foundation of the sanctuary to his reign.⁷⁶ The date of the Heroon can also be established. As well as pottery, comparable to that of the first period of the sanctuary,⁷⁷ a very important source is the inscription by Clearchus, whose characteristic writing can hardly be dated to a period after the reign of Antiochus I.⁷⁸ This inscription shows that Kineas was by then dead, but we must take account of the fact that he also lived in Ai Khanoum for some time before his death, the length of which we unfortunately cannot estimate. The oldest pottery collected during the excavation of the rampart is also of the Seleucid era,⁷⁹ which remains imprecise. But it is likely that once the decision was taken to construct the first buildings, the Seleucid authorities did not wait long before protecting them against external attack. The rampart is therefore probably contemporaneous with them. A further influx of settlers was perhaps also necessary, but there is no trace of it, and we still know nothing about the houses of the first inhabitants.

This was also the time when Clearchus erected the stele with the Delphic maxims in the Heroon. The inscription is a valuable source of information on the mentality of the early settlers. Clearchus was probably not acting in a private capacity.⁸⁰ Erecting a monument in the precinct of a public building required that prior approval be obtained from the city authorities.⁸¹ The symbolic importance of the Heroon even suggests that these

⁷⁵ Bernard 1985, no. 68.

⁷⁶ Martinez-Sève 2010, 201; Martinez-Sève 2014, 274–275. Although the date provides only a *terminus ante quem*, the other coin finds and the architectural sequence of the sanctuary do not allow it to be lowered much.

⁷⁷ Lyonnet 2012, 147–155; Lyonnet 2013a, 361–362. This pottery was found in the embankment that supported the second version of the building. It is certainly from the Seleucid period, but it is difficult to come up with more precise dating given the present state of our knowledge.

⁷⁸ Rougemont 2012, 202, 204–208 (the inscription dates from a period spanning the reigns of Alexander to Antiochus I). Rougemont thus confirms the date originally proposed by Louis Robert (1968), which has been challenged by several authors, including recently by J.D. Lerner (2003/2004, 392–395, with the oldest bibliography).

⁷⁹ Leriche 1986, 53–54, 69, 105–106. This pottery dates from period I–II, which roughly corresponds to the Seleucid era (Lyonnet 2012, 147, who combines periods I, II and III).

⁸⁰ Following Robert (1968, 441–454), many commentators believe that Clearchus was Clearchus of Soli, known to have been a direct disciple of Aristotle: see most recently Rougemont 2012, 203–206, which focuses on the issue and examines conflicting opinions, including that of Lerner 2003/2004, 392–394. I for one am very doubtful. This implies that Clearchus met Aristotle toward the end of Aristotle's life and came to Ai Khanoum early in the reign of Antiochus I. Although not intrinsically impossible, the current evidence suggests that the city was little developed in the third century and that it was mainly occupied by the military. The environment was therefore not very likely to attract the philosopher, unless the road he took went to Ai Khanoum and his journey had a different purpose. According to Frantz Grenet, Clearchus may have been the source of Diodorus (1.94.2), comparing Zoroaster with Moses. Diodorus seems to have known and transmitted an Iranian tradition, obtained straight from Iranian intermediates (Grenet 2005, 49, note 24). He could have travelled in Badakhshan to meet them, because he is known to have been interested in Oriental wisdom.

⁸¹ I thank Pierre Fröhlich for this suggestion.

authorities did not simply give their permission, but were directly involved. This monument embodies the birth of the settler community, the first moment of its collective history. The stele originally bore a set of about 150 maxims, six of which have been more or less preserved: “speak well of everyone,” “practice wisdom,” “Be a well-behaved child / a self-controlled young man / a just mature man, an old man of good council / die without affliction.”⁸² The others are easy to reconstruct, because these precepts are known through epigraphic and literary documents found elsewhere in the Greek world, including Miletopolis in Mysia (*Syll.*³ no. 1268), where they were exhibited in the gymnasium, as well as in Stobaeus, who attributed them to a certain Sosiades.⁸³ The significance of these maxims should not be exaggerated, since they were not unusual.⁸⁴ They consisted of short phrases providing a series of rules of life and behaviour characteristic of Greek identity that were learned by heart and recited in schools and were also a means of teaching children how to read.⁸⁵ The settlers of Ai Khanoum thus proclaimed their community, founded in a remote and barbarous land and composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds. They were bound together through the sharing of these core values, which were constitutive of their identity and more generally that of Greek culture, and which distinguished them from other populations. Respecting these values was thus the basis for the success of the foundation.

We know little about Ai Khanoum for the decades following the death of Antiochus I, an indication perhaps that Seleucid involvement was less extensive than previously. The city nevertheless kept its mint and struck gold, silver and bronze coins in the name of Antiochus II.⁸⁶ Its fortifications were maintained, and even improved, as was evident at the north rampart, which was excavated over several metres about 200 metres west of the end point of the main street. It contained a tower, the outside of which was reinforced first with a brick lining (ceramics period I–II⁸⁷) and then by a buttress probably intended to counter the use of siege engines (ceramics period III), an operation that was contemporary with the adding of a brick facing to the inner side of the curtain wall.⁸⁸ A similar veneer may be seen on the walls bordering the Darya-i Pandj, where a stone fountain was later erected. The inner side of the curtain wall was covered with a facing (ceramics period I–II). A little later, the wall collapsed as a result of the infiltration of water, and was rebuilt. It was then that the fountain was placed at the bottom of the outer face (ceramics period III).⁸⁹

However, under Antiochus II, who succeeded his father in 261 and ruled until 246, Seleucid control of Bactria seems to have been more remote. It was contested by Diodotus, the governor who administered the region on behalf of the king and then seceded and created the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. It is believed that he took power gradually, as

⁸² Cf. note 65.

⁸³ Robert 1968, 427–429 (for Stobaeus, ed. Meineke, vol. 1: 90–92).

⁸⁴ For the links with Delphi, cf. Mairs 2014.

⁸⁵ Oikonomides 1987; Huys 1996 (papyrus edition from the first century AD that included these maxims following a list of heroes, and perhaps was an educational papyrus).

⁸⁶ Kritt 1996, 26; Houghton/Lorber 2002, 215–218, no. 616–627.

⁸⁷ Eight chronological stages have been distinguished. Only period IV, which covers the first decades of the second century BC, can be more or less dated with absolute chronology.

⁸⁸ Leriche 1986, 44–45, 49, 51, 53–54.

⁸⁹ Leriche 1986, 35–36. For the fountain: Leriche/Thoraval 1979.

indicated by the coinage. Diodotus began by replacing the type of coins and the portrait of Antiochus with his own, but left the name of Antiochus unchanged in the legend. The name of Diodotus, accompanied by the royal title (*basileus*), then replaced that of the Seleucid. The Seleucid kings ruled over an empire whose functioning was complex, largely based on the links in terms of individuals and influence that the king forged with his subordinates at various levels of the administrative hierarchy. In many areas, local or regional governors enjoyed considerable power, sometimes equivalent to that of a king, but continued to act within an imperial sphere that they themselves acknowledged as Seleucid. The strongest and most enterprising of them were eventually able to break away, though gradually, so as to obtain the support of all those who were previously tied to Seleucid power. For instance, this is what happened in Asia Minor with the foundation of the Attalid kingdom of Pergamum.⁹⁰ A similar process appears to have occurred in Bactria. An important step towards independence came when Diodotus adopted the royal title of *basileus* on his coinage. It is difficult to specify exactly when this occurred, though various suggestions have been made. It was thought that this step was taken not by Diodotus himself, but by his son, also called Diodotus (II), who would have taken the title when he succeeded his father around 235 BC.⁹¹ However, Jens Jakobsson has nevertheless recently put forward an alternative hypothesis that alters our understanding of Diodotus's secession. He proposes that the coins in the style of Diodotus minted in the name of Antiochus were not issued by Diodotus I, as previously thought, but by a Graeco-Bactrian king named Antiochus who succeeded Diodotus II, probably his brother, and continued to strike coins characteristic of the new dynasty.⁹² This proposal implies that the revolt by Diodotus I was sudden, since in that case he would have adopted the royal title from the beginning, while he was changing the coin style and the portrait.⁹³ Jakobsson considers that he reigned only briefly, around 255–250 BC, followed by Diodotus II from around 250 to 240, and then by Antiochus between 240 and 225. Although revolutionary, this assumption seems to be supported by some die-links among gold staters struck by this Antiochus and others struck by Euthydemus I, who would therefore have succeeded him.⁹⁴ These different proposals do not make much difference for the chronology of Ai Khanoum.⁹⁵ But they create uncertainties that prevent more exact placing, under the Seleucids or under the Diodotids, of various maintenance and construction

⁹⁰ Chrubasik 2013.

⁹¹ Holt 1999, 87–125; Kritt 2001, 7–47. Cf. also Kovalenko 1995/1996. A new analysis of their currency suggests that Diodotus I himself took the decision and, if so, probably in the second part of his life: cf. Bordeaux, forthcoming (I thank Olivier Bordeaux for letting me read this paper prior to publication).

⁹² Jakobsson 2010. The fact that a son of Diodotus I could bear the name of Antiochus presents no problem insofar as Diodotus was for part of his life a member of the royal Seleucid entourage; it is therefore understandable that he could have chosen this name for one of his sons. Diodotus may also have maintained links of kinship with the Seleucids, as proposed by Jakobsson (2010, 21). This implies, however, that once he became king, this Antiochus did not change his name to a regnal name.

⁹³ He would therefore have behaved like Molon in 222 and like Timarchus around 162 (Jakobsson 2010, 23–24).

⁹⁴ Zeng 2013. These Bactrian staters came to light recently from a large hoard discovered in 2001. The staters of Euthydemus I had been struck from an obverse die previously used by Antiochos.

⁹⁵ They do, however, affect the identification of the mints where coins were struck, including possibly that of Ai Khanoum. According to Jens Jakobsson, Diodotus I struck all his silver coins in the mint identified by Frank Holt as the Bactra mint (workshop B: Holt 1999, 114, 124–125).

operations that have been observed there.⁹⁶ Jakobsson's proposal also implies that the Seleucids retained possession of Ai Khanoum for a very short time after the reign of Antiochus I.

These political events probably had an impact on the development of Ai Khanoum. It does not appear that the initiatives taken under Antiochus I were fully implemented. Nothing in the known documentation shows that the city grew and increased in population. The pottery used by the people who lived there was largely undecorated, and the vases were simple in form and varied little, suggesting that the population was small in size and that their activities were all much the same. From this evidence, Bertille Lyonnet has concluded that residents were mostly soldiers and that the city essentially housed a garrison.⁹⁷ The oldest excavated houses are, in addition, solely from the early second century.⁹⁸ Diodotus and his son (or sons) did not completely lose interest in the city, however. They were the architects of the complete reconstruction of the temple and its sanctuary, after one or the other officially assumed the royal title.⁹⁹ This operation is dated by four bronze coins minted in the name of King Diodotus, found within the floor of the new temple and in a layer of fill supporting the floor of a portico in the courtyard.¹⁰⁰ The reconstruction of the temple complex was also perhaps motivated by taking the royal title, because it was important for the new king to obtain divine favours and place himself under the protection of the gods, the guardians of royal legitimacy.¹⁰¹

3. Ai Khanoum, the royal residence of the Graeco-Bactrian kings

The Graeco-Bactrian kings were truly responsible for the development of Ai Khanoum that occurred from the beginning of the second century, when, in a related process, the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom itself entered into a growth phase. The first architects of this change were Euthydemus I (about 235–190) and his son Demetrius I (about 190–180).¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Pierre Leriche found traces of a fire that destroyed the river rampart at the end of ceramics period II (Leriche 1986, 38). It is tempting to account for then by an attack made against the city in the context of Diodotus's secession. But it is better to remain cautious. An attack made in a strictly local context, or even simply an accident, may also have caused it. It is nonetheless likely that ceramics period III corresponds to the time of Diodotides, whether or not it is possible to finely delineate the chronological limits. Examination of the pottery found at the sanctuary may provide additional items, because a period of occupation in the Diodotid era has been clearly identified there.

⁹⁷ Lyonnet 2012, 158–159. In her opinion, this comment applies to the city at the time of Antiochus I. But as she considers the ceramics of periods I, II and III to form the same set and that the real change occurred in period IV (Lyonnet 2012, 147), the comment should also be applicable to the following decades.

⁹⁸ Cf. the recent publication on private housing in Ai Khanoum (Lecuyot 2013) and, for the chronology, Lyonnet 2013b, and Martinez-Sève 2013a.

⁹⁹ Martinez-Sève 2010, 202–203. Drawing on the findings of Holt and Kritt, in this publication I have assumed that coins minted in the name of Diodotus were produced by Diodotus II.

¹⁰⁰ Bernard 1985, no. 85, 91, 97, 101. These coins are part of coinage attributed to Diodotus II by Holt and Kritt. This places the rebuilding of the temple between 235 and 225 BC (or between 250 and 240 BC if we accept Jakobsson's hypothesis).

¹⁰¹ Kritt 2001, 101 believes, moreover, that Ai Khanoum was the first capital of Diodotus I; Martinez-Sève 2010, 202–203.

¹⁰² Coloru 2009, 175–193.

Euthydemus seized power by overthrowing Diodotus II (or Antiochus).¹⁰³ He then firmly established himself on the throne and even resisted an attempt to reconquer Bactria by the Seleucid king Antiochus III. After besieging Bactra from 208 to 206 but failing to remove Euthydemus, Antiochus III finally acknowledged his royal title.¹⁰⁴ Antiochus III did not spend all this time besieging Bactra, and probably led operations elsewhere in Bactria. He possibly went to Ai Khanoum, where he would have minted currency. Brian Kritt attributes two bronze coins in the name of Antiochus to the Ai Khanoum mint, made with the same technique as those of Euthydemus and possibly struck on coin blanks prepared for him, but which had not yet been used. Antiochus would also have stamped an anchor countermark on bronze coins issued by Antiochus I and Antiochus II that had been in circulation for a long time. Kritt thus postulates that, on his arrival in Ai Khanoum, Antiochus III was obliged to pay for his expenditure using countermarked coins, before arranging for coins bearing his name to be minted locally.¹⁰⁵ Kritt also attributes to Antiochus III the destruction of parts of the rampart, which would have retained evidence of his assault.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, a section of the north rampart collapsed as a result of being undermined, while traces of a large fire were found on the river wall, where the external face of the rampart near the fountain also collapsed.¹⁰⁷ This destruction was followed by the restoration of the rampart, which was repaired or partially rebuilt, a phenomenon also observed in the citadel.¹⁰⁸ But these events have been dated to period IV in the history of the city, and if the dating is correct, it must be assumed that they occurred after the arrival of Antiochus III, since period IV covers the first decades of the second century.¹⁰⁹

Euthydemus managed to prevail over the Seleucid king, and his successes helped consolidate his power. The kingdom was organised on the model of the Seleucid kingdom, the political and administrative structures of which were emulated.¹¹⁰ The last years of Euthydemus's reign and the reign of Demetrius were taken up by military campaigns that enabled them to extend their dominance, particularly to the south. Demetrius was the first to cross the Hindu Kush and establish himself in Paropamisadae and Arachosia, the regions of Kabul and Kandahar.¹¹¹ Ai Khanoum benefited from this new situation. The city acquired a new impetus, reflected in an increase in its population, which also affected its territory, where the Greeks appear previously not to have been very numerous.¹¹² It also seems to have been more affected than before by influences from the Mediterranean

¹⁰³ Polybius 11.34.

¹⁰⁴ Polybius 10.48–49, 11.34; Holt 1999, 126–133.

¹⁰⁵ Kritt 2001, 152–157; Houghton/Lorber 2002, 466–467, no. 1283–1284.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. also Lerner 2003/2004, 396–398.

¹⁰⁷ Leriche 1986, 37, 38, 45, 54, 82 (the attack has been attributed to Euthydemus, but the chronology adopted needs to be corrected).

¹⁰⁸ Leriche 1986, 23, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. note 114 for the dating of period IV.

¹¹⁰ Coloru 2009, 265–269.

¹¹¹ Bernard in Bernard/Pinault/Rougemont 2004, 269–276; Coloru 2009, 187–193.

¹¹² Lyonnet 1997, 148–149. A number of farms have been excavated on the Ai Khanoum plain, whose date is not always easy to specify. The one for which historical data is available dates from this period (Francfort 2013b, 161–165).

world. Very marked changes were observed in the area of ceramics.¹¹³ The shapes of vases were enriched with new models, many of them directly adapted from the production of potteries in the eastern Mediterranean, such as the so-called “Megarian” bowls, which copied dishes made of precious metal. Manufacturing and cooking techniques also underwent development.¹¹⁴ The growth of the city resulted in the construction of private houses, including the house in the southwest quarter and smaller installations in the vicinity of the sanctuary,¹¹⁵ and a house under the remains of the gymnasium.¹¹⁶ Several public buildings also date from this period, including the monumental Propylaea, through which one passed to reach the buildings located under the remains of the palace and the gymnasium.¹¹⁷ The sanctuary underwent a complete renovation: the temple with indented recesses remained operational, but all the buildings in the courtyard were rebuilt to a completely revised plan. The Heroon of Kineas, which had deteriorated, was also completely rebuilt. The new building, larger in size, was constructed on a terrace covering the remains of the previous Heroon.

The creation and then the strengthening of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom had a decisive impact on the development and role of the city. Even though the Seleucid kings had made it one of the major centres of Bactria, it was hitherto but one element in an extensive network of colonies extending as far as the Mediterranean. Now, along with Bactra, it was a cornerstone of a smaller kingdom, but unlike Bactra, it was a new city that it was possible to organise more freely. The Graeco-Bactrian kings could concentrate their efforts on it and display their power through monumental and prestigious buildings, while using its location to maintain their control of the surrounding area. An inscription found recently near Kuliab thus suggests that a member of the royal entourage called Heliodotus was in the vicinity, and assumed command or completed a mission shortly after the victory over Antiochus III. He dedicated an altar to the goddess Hestia and erected it in a sacred grove of Zeus in honour of King Euthydemus and his son Demetrius.¹¹⁸ It may be deduced that there was a settlement there occupied by a Greek community, in all likelihood a small fort where a military detachment was stationed, along with some civilians. These men depended on a military and civilian command based in a larger settlement located in eastern Bactria: it is reasonable to suppose that this was Ai Khanoum. But

¹¹³ Lyonnet 2001, 151–152 (the chronology adopted here is too high); Lyonnet 2012, 155; Lyonnet 2013b, 187–188.

¹¹⁴ This pottery is typical of period IV, originally dated from the third century. But with the publication of the ceramics of the agora of Athens it has emerged that these Megarian bowls could not be from a date earlier than the beginning of the second century. The dating of period IV has been brought forward and placed in the first decades of the second century, consistently with the proposal that J.D. Lerner has formulated in various papers (Lerner 2003/2004; Lerner 2005; Lerner 2010; Lyonnet 2013b), which has contributed significantly to changing our perception of the history of Ai Khanoum.

¹¹⁵ Lecuyot 2013, 13–74 for the house, and 59–61 for its former states (Lyonnet 2013b, 183–189 for the chronology); Martinez-Sève 2013b, 137–138 for houses in the neighbourhood of the sanctuary. Barracks were also built on the Acropolis; they probably served to house soldiers (Leriche 1986, 62–63; Lecuyot 2013, 198–199).

¹¹⁶ Veuve 1987, 107–109. This building is located at the site of the future round exedra in the south-west corner of the courtyard.

¹¹⁷ For the Propylaea: Guillaume 1983, 5–10, 29. For the remains beneath the gymnasium, consisting of a large bath-house collection: Veuve 1987, 52–58.

¹¹⁸ Bernard/Pinault/Rougemont 2004, 333–356; Rougemont 2012, 255–258, no. 151.

does this new momentum alone explain the regeneration of Mediterranean influences? If Antiochus III did come to Ai Khanoum between 208 and 206, he may have decided to leave behind soldiers and even a new group of settlers, and to set about rebuilding the city. The policy he implemented during his reign was guided by the desire to remodel the Seleucid kingdom and rebuild the political structures put in place by his ancestors. Restoring the Seleucid colony of Ai Khanoum might have been one of his objectives. But he did not remain in Bactria long enough to leave a lasting imprint there. Euthydemus thus played an important role that was all the more decisive since Antiochus had recognised his legitimacy and confirmed him in his royal function. If new settlers were installed at Ai Khanoum, they remained there with his consent and under his control. We can also assume that some of the soldiers who came with Antiochus preferred to stay put and enter the service of Euthydemus rather than undertake the long journey home. The strengthening of the kingdom must also have helped the resumption of trade with the Mediterranean and perhaps attracted new immigrants.¹¹⁹ Euthydemus's victory thus created the conditions for renewal and, for Ai Khanoum, a new situation that succeeded the initial impetus provided by the Seleucid kings.

The city further developed during the first half of the second century, especially in the reign of Eucratides I, the most well-known of the Graeco-Bactrian kings (circa 171–148).¹²⁰ He seems to have spent part of his time restoring the unity of the kingdom, which had broken up into a number of principalities under the impact of competing kings.¹²¹ One such principality was probably centred around the city of Ai Khanoum.¹²² Eucratides also expanded his realm, particularly towards India, where he pushed the Indo-Greek King Menander back beyond the Punjab. Eucratides acquired large amounts of booty in India, some of which remained in the treasury of the Ai Khanoum palace: Indian silver coins and precious objects, including agate and rock crystal vases, a wooden throne decorated with inlays, and the lid of a casket (or the back of a mirror) made of shell and decorated with scenes from Indian mythology by means of coloured glass inlays.¹²³ Ai Khanoum benefited from the consequences of this exceptional reign. An extensive architectural programme was undertaken and the city was completely renovated and rebuilt. It was endowed with prestigious monuments, the enormous size of which rules out

¹¹⁹ Lerner 2003/2004, 399.

¹²⁰ Here I take the dates proposed by Wilson/Assar 2007. The authors rely on the fact that according to Justin the death of Eucratides coincided with the conquest by Mithridates I of the Medes (41.6.5.). This conquest is dated by G.F. Assar as late 148/early 147 BC. An inscription in the Ai Khanoum treasury suggests that Eucratides reigned for at least 24 years, which would place his accession in 171 (Bernard *et al.* 1980, 23–27; Rougemont 2012, 226–227, no. 117). This is a minimum. Rapin believes that the treasury operated for another four years before suffering an attack, possibly related to the death of Eucratides (Rapin 1992, 114). He would therefore have ascended the throne four years earlier, around 175 BC. Note that this date has been proposed for the beginning of the “Yavana” Greek era, commemorating an important event in the history of the Graeco-Bactrian kings (Falk and Bennett 2009). For another proposal see Rapin 2010. The chronology of Graeco-Bactrian history is virtually unknown and is based on various very tentative hypotheses that may be called into question by any new documents.

¹²¹ Coloru 2009, 195–230; Rapin 2010.

¹²² Rapin 2010, 242–246 stresses that Euthydemus II, Agathocles I and then Demetrius II were based in eastern Bactria during the decade 180–170 BC.

¹²³ Rapin 1992, 281–287.

their having been funded solely by the inhabitants of the city.¹²⁴ It therefore seems very likely that Ai Khanoum was the main residence of Eucratides, his “capital.” But other large-scale schemes had been implemented by some of the kings who had reigned before him, though these remain unidentified.¹²⁵ For example, the gymnasium from the time of Eucratides was preceded by one or more monuments of impressive dimensions.¹²⁶ To the north, there was a large courtyard, bordered by buildings on two of its sides, altogether covering an area of 17,200 square metres. To the south, there was a rotunda building as well as an impressive bath complex. The reconstruction of the sanctuary, which I have suggested to have dated from the reign of Euthydemus I, or more likely of Demetrius I, may in fact have occurred a little later, being contemporary with these monuments. Indeed, a fragment of a Megarian bowl was found in a preparatory layer under the floor of the buildings.¹²⁷ We now believe that these vases began to spread throughout the Greek world from around 175 BC,¹²⁸ i.e. a little after the death of Demetrius I, which is usually put around 180 BC.¹²⁹

Eucratides endowed himself with a capital rivalling the main centres of the Hellenistic world.¹³⁰ The regal character of the city was now amplified by the substantial mass of the palace, extending over seven hectares in the centre of the lower town. The public buildings alone occupied about a third of this lower town. The king’s power was also expressed through imposing buildings such as the theatre¹³¹ and the gymnasium,¹³² which placed Eucratides on a par with other Hellenistic kings and showed that he, like them, was also a protector of Greek arts and culture. It is also noteworthy that literary papyri and parchments were kept in a room in the treasury.¹³³ Eucratides probably supported artists from the Mediterranean world at his court, as we know the Parthian kings did at the same period in their capital city of Nisa¹³⁴ and as Macedonian and Hellenistic kings had always done. Moreover, Bernard pointed out the many similarities between some of the capitals in the bouleuterion of Miletus, dating from the reign of Antiochus IV, and

¹²⁴ The palace occupied an area of over seven hectares. The gymnasium covered a square of about one hectare and the adjacent courtyard extended over a fairly wide area; the theatre was 85 metres in diameter and could accommodate nearly 5,000 spectators.

¹²⁵ To these should be added the construction work on the ramparts that we mentioned above, which dates from the transition between periods IV and V.

¹²⁶ Veuve 1987, 43–52, 106–107.

¹²⁷ In Gardin/Lyonnet 1976, 48, it is stated that these fragments were lying on the floor of a chapel built on the south side of the courtyard. They were attributed to levels 4 or 5 of the sanctuary, then dated at 270–250. The fragments were collected in 1972, in the sector of the chapel, but from the relevant preparatory layer, not from the floor.

¹²⁸ Rotroff 1982; Rotroff 1997; Lerner 2003/2004, 381; Rotroff 2006.

¹²⁹ Wilson 2003 has nevertheless proposed bringing forward the reign of Demetrius I by a few years, and considers that it ended around 170–167 BC.

¹³⁰ I will say less about this period in the history of Ai Khanoum, which is rather better known than the previous ones. See, most recently, Francfort *et al.* 2014, and Martinez-Sève 2014 with the older bibliography.

¹³¹ Bernard 1976b, 314–322; Bernard 1978c, 429–441.

¹³² Veuve 1987, 23–41, 103–106.

¹³³ Rapin 1987; Rapin 1992, 115–130; Rougemont 2012, 236–242, no. 131–132.

¹³⁴ Invernizzi 2007, 174–176. For examples of achievements that can be attributed to some of these artists, see Invernizzi 2009 and Invernizzi 2010.

those of the hypostyle hall of the palace.¹³⁵ The members of the royal entourage thus lived luxuriously, in rich houses calling for numerous servants.¹³⁶ Eucratides was also responsible for the rehabilitation of the city's defences, which were renovated or rebuilt.¹³⁷ His presence and investment left his mark on Ai Khanoum to such an extent that it has seemed reasonable to view this city as the Eucratidea mentioned by Strabo (11.11.2, 15.1.3) and Ptolemy (6.2.8).¹³⁸

The king and the elite also liked to present themselves as people of Greek culture, educating their children in the traditional manner within the confines of the gymnasium. The many bathrooms excavated in the palace, beneath the gymnasium and in aristocratic houses, reveal the importance they attached to bodily care, a characteristic Greek practice unknown among Iranian populations.¹³⁹ The Greek character of the city and its architectural decoration is, moreover, what made its discovery so important. But we know very little about the appearance of the other eastern Greek colonies and of other royal towns. We know that there was a theatre in Babylon and Seleucia on the Tigris,¹⁴⁰ and probably a gymnasium at Susa,¹⁴¹ where a wealthy aristocratic house was also excavated.¹⁴² These large cities must have common features, and Ai Khanoum was no exception in this respect. If we accept, therefore, that it was the main residence of Eucratides, his "capital," it is not impossible that like the other great Hellenistic royal residences it had the attributes of a true Greek city and was endowed with traditional civic institutions. One sometimes gets the idea that Greek cities, because they were subject to royal power, were opposed to it. But it was the kings who were the main promoters of civic life. They were the only people authorised to found cities or to grant civic institutions to a community. They were also often the protectors of these institutions. For a king like Eucratides, promoting Greek culture meant erecting prestigious buildings such as the theatre and gymnasium, as well as perhaps encouraging civic life, since this was a characteristic part of Greek culture, as the Greeks were fully aware. The status of Ai Khanoum may be comparable to that of Alexandria, Seleucia on the Tigris, Antioch or Pergamum,¹⁴³ especially since the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom functioned much like other Hellenistic kingdoms.¹⁴⁴ Thus Ai Khanoum may well have possessed traditional institutions, assemblies and magistrates, but in close association with the king and his administration, which

¹³⁵ Bernard 1968, 120–129. According to Henri-Paul Francfort, these capitals were made by artists of Milesian origin, sent to Ai Khanoum from Ecbatana at the time when Timarchus, himself a Milesian, usurped the power (Francfort 1984, 121–122).

¹³⁶ Lecuyot 2013, 13–74, 103–136, 193–197.

¹³⁷ Leriche 1986, 13, 25, 39, 41, 68–69.

¹³⁸ Bernard *et al.* 1980, 38. This identification is now generally accepted. Note, however, that in this paper it was proposed tentatively.

¹³⁹ Bernard 1971, 389–402; Veuve 1987, 107–108; Lecuyot 2013, 6, 30–34, 40–41, 47–48, 59, 76–77, 85–87, 108, 125–128, 194–196.

¹⁴⁰ Babylon: Wetzel/Schmidt/Mallwitz 1957; Mohammed Ali 1979; Bergamini 2011; Seleucia: Messina 2010.

¹⁴¹ The building itself is not known, but an inscription, probably a decree, mentions a gymnasiarch called Nikolaos (Rougemon 2012, 46–47, no. 10).

¹⁴² Martinez-Sève 2002, 39–44. For Susa in the Hellenistic period, see also Martinez-Sève 2011.

¹⁴³ Only Pergamum's status is relatively well known, thanks to the epigraphic documentation found there. See in particular Allen 1983, 159–174.

¹⁴⁴ Coloru 2009, 265–269.

oversaw their activities.¹⁴⁵ We know nothing of these because the citizens of the city appear not to have been in the habit of engraving the administration's decisions in stone.¹⁴⁶

Ai Khanoum is a special case in Central Asia. A city of prime importance and the only one known for the Greek period, it is often cited as an example on account of the dynamism of the Greek traditions manifested there. But it alone does not provide evidence as to the forms taken by the Greek presence in the region. It was primarily a royal city, founded by the Seleucid kings as their seat of power in eastern Bactria. It later became one of the principal residences of the Graeco-Bactrian kings, who designed it based on the model of the great capitals of the Hellenistic world. Its history was thus often determined by the dynasties that controlled it, and the city experienced the same fate as these dynasties, their periods of glory as well as their setbacks, the latter exemplified by the events that impacted it around 145 BC and led to its ruin. The city was under attack at about the time when Eucratides was assassinated by one of his sons (Justin 41.6.5). It was assaulted by nomadic groups and probably also by Bactrian populations opposed to the emblems of Graeco-Bactrian power, particularly the palace, which was devastated,¹⁴⁷ and the large statue of the temple with indented recesses, so antithetical to the aniconic practices of Iranian peoples.¹⁴⁸ These events led to the flight of the Graeco-Bactrian administration, along with all the inhabitants associated with royal power and more generally the various elites, leaving the city occupied by the local component of the population, which had no interest in Hellenism and its manifestations.¹⁴⁹ Shortly afterwards, Graeco-Bactrian power abandoned eastern Bactria, and then the whole region. There is no better example to show that the city's destiny was bound up with that of its kings.

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¹⁴⁵ For the links between Ai Khanoum and the various kings who held it, see Martinez-Sève 2012b.

¹⁴⁶ We must also take into account the fact that the city was subject to very considerable damage at the end of its existence and its stone resources and metal objects were systematically looted. Some steles could also have been destroyed at this time.

¹⁴⁷ It was severely damaged by a huge fire started in several places at once (Bernard *et al.* 1973, 2–3), and its buildings were then systematically demolished.

¹⁴⁸ Martinez-Sève 2010, 204–205.

¹⁴⁹ Martinez-Sève 2013a, 218–220. The many dead, whose remains were exhumed in the orchestra of the theatre, appear to have been killed in this attack (Grenet, in Francfort *et al.* 2014, 66).

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