



## ĀY KĀNOM

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**ĀY KĀNOM** or AĪ KHANUM (Tepe), a local Uzbek name (lit. Lady Moon hill) designating the site of an important Greek colonial city in northern [Afghanistan](#) excavated since 1965 by a French mission and which belonged to a powerful hellenistic state born of Alexander's conquest in [Central Asia](#) (329-27 B.C.). Centered around Bactriana, the middle valley of the Oxus (Amu Darya), this colonized area was first part of the [Seleucid empire](#), then, around 250 B.C., it became an independent kingdom which remained under Greek rule until approximately 150 B.C. when it was destroyed by nomad invasions from the northern steppes. The city of AĪ Khanum which controlled a fertile agricultural plain irrigated by an extensive system of canals (J.-Cl. Gardin and P. Gentelle, *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient*, 1976, pp. 59-99) and a mountainous back-country ([Badakṣān](#)) rich in minerals and semiprecious stones (rubies, lapis), was built at the junction of the [Oxus river](#) and of one of its left-bank affluents, the Kokča. Roughly triangular in shape (1,800 by 1,600 m), it encompassed within a girt of powerful mud-brick ramparts (P. Leriche, *Fouilles d'AĪ Khanoum IV: Les remparts d'AĪ Khanoum*, Paris, 1986) a lower town where most of the buildings were located and an acropolis on a hill (P. Bernard and D. Schlumberger, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 1965, pp. 595-657; P. Bernard, *Proc. British Academy*, 1967, p. 71-95). Outside the ramparts lay a suburb and the necropolis. Although the Greek colonists kept their national language and way of life, the architecture of the town, combining mud-brick walls and stone columns and pillars, reveals a mixture of Greek and oriental traditions (P. Bernard, *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, 1966, pp. 127-33; 1967, pp. 306-24; 1968, pp.



263-79; 1969, pp. 313-55; 1970, pp. 301-49; 1971, pp. 387-452; 1972, pp. 605-32; 1974, pp. 280-308; 1975, pp. 167-97; 1976, pp. 287-322; idem, JA, 1976, pp. 245-75; P. Bernard et al., Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum I, pp. 1-120; Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient, 1976, pp. 6-51). Columnated porticoes of the Corinthian, Doric, and more rarely Ionic orders (P. Bernard, Syria, 1968, pp. 111-51) bespeak the hellenistic tradition as do the antefixes and tiles of the roofs and such typical buildings as a gymnasium, a theater, a fountain, and funerary monuments. The gymnasium, of colossal proportions, consisted of several courtyards surrounded by rooms, of which the two principal ones were devoted to physical training and intellectual activities, and included extensive bath-facilities (S. Veuwe, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum VI: Le gymnase, Paris, 1987). In the theater, made entirely of mud bricks and as large as the one in [Babylon](#), the usual tiered rows of seats were interrupted by loggias for prominent people. In a fountain a water-spout carved to represent one of the characters of Greek comedy proves that the theatrical repertory itself was Greek. Funerary monuments for eminent citizens were built inside the ramparts and imitated Hellenic temples. In the most ancient of them—and the most modest—a certain Kineas was buried, who may have been the city's founder. In the precinct of this heroon a stele, on which was engraved a copy of the famous Delphic maxims which embody Greek wisdom, had been erected (L. Robert in Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum I, pp. 207-37). Alongside these buildings of Hellenic types there were others of Oriental tradition in which local elements were fused with Iranian and even Mesopotamian ones. Three temples have been discovered, none of which has a Greek plan. One of them, a simple stepped podium in open air on the acropolis, is clearly related to Iranian and Central Asian sanctuaries of the Achaemenid period. Another, standing on a three-stepped platform, with a square plan and a broad vestibule leading to a smaller cella flanked by two sacristies, and whose walls are decorated with indented recesses, is also purely Oriental and can be compared with certain Parthian temples at [Dura Europos](#). A third temple with a triple cella has the same wall-decoration and stepped platform. Although the official pantheon, as it appears on the coinage of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, was, with a few exceptions, purely Greek (Cl. Petitot, RN, 1975, pp. 23-57; P. Bernard, *ibid.*, pp. 58-69; 1973, pp. 238-89; 1974, pp. 6-41; Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum IV: Les monnaies hors trésors, Paris, 1985), this type of religious architecture implies a strong influx of local beliefs in the city-cults and suggests divinities of a syncretic nature. The vast patrician mansions, with their front courtyard and the disposition of the secondary rooms grouped around the principal one which is usually surrounded by a peripheral



corridor, except for the spacious bathrooms, have nothing to do with the traditional Greek houses (P. Bernard, *JA*, 1976, pp. 257-66). A huge arsenal housed the military equipment (F. Grenet, *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient*, 1980, pp. 51-63). The city's main building was a monumental palace—probably the governor's—approximately 300 m<sup>2</sup>, which was situated in the middle of the lower town. It comprised several courtyards, two of them possessed columned porticoes, residential quarters, administrative sections with offices and reception rooms, and also a treasury in which was found a large number of storage jars, several of them bearing economic inscriptions in Greek (Cl. Rapin, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 1983, pp. 315-72), a large amount of fragments of cut and uncut semi-precious stones, among them a great quantity of lapis lazuli, and fragments of Greek literary papyri. Although the columns and antefixes give a certain Greek aura, the compact aggregation of several ensembles in the same compound linked by a complex crisscrossing of corridors, the plan of certain units, the monumentality of proportions, and the repetitious symmetry, all point to Oriental conceptions. Similarly the pottery offers examples of Greek types as well as purely local forms (J.-Cl. Gardin in *Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum I*, pp. 121-88). In the field of fine arts, the Greek colonists were much more conservative and seemed to have been satisfied with traditional Greek productions, as can be seen from fragments of stone statuettes, from the water-spouts of a fountain representing respectively a dolphin-head, a dog-head and a comic mask, and from the pebble-mosaics which paved the bath-rooms of the palace and were decorated with floral and animal designs (P. Bernard, *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient*, 1976, pp. 6-24). A beautiful medallion in gilt silver, figuring the goddess Cybele on her lion-driven chariot, followed by one of her priests holding an umbrella over her and facing another one who sacrifices at an altar, represents, through its flat Hieratic style, a rare exception to this general trend (P. Bernard, *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, 1970, pp. 339-47). Fragments of life-size statues modeled in clay or stucco attest the introduction of a technique which was subsequently spread all over Central Asia. As one might expect in such a wealthy and urbanized society, workshops were active in producing all kinds of artifacts both for utilitarian purposes, for example grindstones of a specifically Greek type, and for the luxury market such as carved ivories (P. Bernard, *Syria*, 1970, pp. 327-43) and vessels of dark schist inlaid with colored stones (H.-P. Francfort, *Arts Asiatiques*, 1976, pp. 91-95).

See also AFGHANISTAN [VIII: ARCHAEOLOGY](#); [IX: PRE-ISLAMIC ART](#).



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See also *EIr.* I, p. 530.

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