

The Archaeology of Central Asia, c. 500 BC – AD 200: Alexander in Afghanistan and Buddhas in Bactria

Instructor: Dr. Rachel Mairs

Course Description

Central Asia, which has in the past tended to be regarded as a frontier region of the worlds of the Mediterranean, Near East, India and the Eurasian steppe, is increasingly coming to be studied as a cultural and political entity in its own right. In the period from the latter half of the first millennium BC to the early centuries of the common era it was an especially dynamic zone of cultural interaction. Politically, the territories of modern Afghanistan and the former-Soviet Central Asian Republics (and in particular Bactria, the basin of the upper river Oxus), became part of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, were then conquered by Alexander the Great, and subsequently became the centre of two powerful local states: under dynasties of Greek-named kings, descended from Alexander's military settlers, and then the Kushan Empire, founded by the descendants of later immigrants from the north. There is a rich archaeological and historical record available from this period, much of which has only relatively recently become accessible to scholars.



This schedule is provisional! Further details will be given in class.

All readings will be posted on the course Wiki as PDFs, and anything in a language other than English will be accompanied by a translation.

September

Topic 1: Historical Overview and the Sources.

Wednesday 7th

First class: no reading

Friday 9th

For an overview of the historical periods covered in this course, you should aim to read these chapters within the first week or so:

Harmatta, J., B. N. Puri and G. F. Etemadi eds. (1994) *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia. Vol. 2, The Development of Sedentary and Nomadic Civilizations: 700 B.C. to A.D.*

250. Paris: UNESCO. Chapter 3: 'Alexander and his Successors in Central Asia'; Chapter 4: 'The Greek Kingdoms of Central Asia'.

Monday 12th

Both of these articles consist mostly of pictures...

Lecuyot, G. and O. Ishizawa (2006) "NHK, Taisei, CNRS: a Franco-Japanese collaboration for the 3D Reconstruction of the Town of Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan," in Robert Vergniquex and Caroline Delevoie (eds.), *Virtual Retrospect 2005: Proceedings of the conference Virtual Retrospect 2005 / Actes du colloque Virtual Retrospect 2005*, 121-124. Bordeaux: Editions Ausonius.

Lecuyot, G. (2007). Ai Khanoum Reconstructed. After Alexander: Central Asia Before Islam. J. Cribb and G. Herrmann. Oxford, Oxford University Press for the British Academy: 155-162.

Topic 2: Alexander the Great

Wednesday 14th

Friday 16th

Holt (1999), *Alexander the Great and Bactria*: Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Monday 19th

Optional readings (background for film excerpts to be shown in class):

Vasunia, P. (2010) "Alexander Sikandar," in Susan A. Stephens and Phiroze Vasunia (eds.), *Classics and National Cultures*, 302-324. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kipling, Rudyard. (1888) *The Man Who Would Be King*.

Topic 3: War in Afghanistan

Wednesday 21st

Holt, F. L. (2005) *Into the Land of Bones: Alexander the Great in Afghanistan*. (Hellenistic Culture and Society 47.) Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction.

Friday 23rd

Hopkirk, P. (1992) *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*. Kodansha International. Introduction.

Monday 26th

Rashid, A. (2000) *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Introduction.

Topic 4: Numismatics

Wednesday 28th

Friday 30th

Holt, F. L. (1999) *Thundering Zeus: The Making of Hellenistic Bactria*. (Hellenistic Culture and Society XXXII.) Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction.

October

Monday 3rd

No reading: in-class work with coin catalogues.

Topic 5: The Third Century BC

Wednesday 5th

Karttunen, K. (1997), *India and the Hellenistic World*. Chapter 6: 'Greeks in the East'.

Friday 7th

Historical sources: Polybios 11.34, Justin 41.4 (collected in Appendix to Holt 1999 *Thundering Zeus*, above).

Monday 10th

Fall Weekend Holiday. No classes.

Wednesday 12th

Inscriptions 1: The Greek Asokan Edicts, texts collected and translated in the appendix to Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* – see below.

Inscriptions 2: Bernard, P., G.-J. Pinault and G. Rougemont (2004) "Deux nouvelles inscriptions grecques de l'Asie Centrale," *Journal des Savants* 2004, 227-356. [English translation of relevant portions will be circulated.]

Topic 6: Ai Khanoum

Friday 14th

Bernard, P. (1967) "Ai Khanoum on the Oxus: A Hellenistic City in Central Asia," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 53, 71-95.

Bernard, P. (1982) "An Ancient Greek City in Central Asia," *Scientific American* 246, 126-135.

Monday 17th

Rapin, C. (1990) "Greeks in Afghanistan: Ai Khanum," in J.-P. Descœudres (ed.), *Greek Colonists and Native Populations, Proceedings of the First Australian Congress of Classical Archaeology Held in Honour of Emeritus Professor A. D. Trendall*, 329-342. Canberra; Oxford: Humanities Research Centre; Clarendon Press.

Wednesday 19th

No set reading (recommended to read ahead for future classes).

Topic 7: Survey Archaeology in Central Asia

Friday 21st

Alcock, S. E., J. E. Gates and J. E. Rempel (2003) "Reading the Landscape: Survey Archaeology and the Hellenistic Oikoumene," in A. Erskine (eds.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, 354-372. Oxford: Blackwell.

Banning, E. B. (1996) "Highlands and Lowlands: Problems and Survey Frameworks for Rural Archaeology in the Near East," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 301, 25-45. [Esp. section on the eastern Bactria survey.]

Monday 24th

Stride, S. (2007) "Regions and Territories in Southern Central Asia: What the Surkhan Darya Province Tells Us about Bactria," in Joe Cribb and Georgina Herrmann (eds.), *After Alexander: Central Asia Before Islam*, 99-117. (Proceedings of the British Academy 133.) Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy.

Wednesday 26th

No set reading.

Topic 8: Administrative Continuity in Achaemenid, Hellenistic and Kushan Bactria

Friday 28th

Shaked, S. (2004) *Le satrape de Bactriane et son gouverneur: Documents araméens du IV^e s. avant notre ère provenant de Bactriane.* (Persika 4.) Paris: de Boccard. [English translation of excerpts will be made available.]

Monday 31st

Rapin, C. (1983) "Les inscriptions économiques de la trésorerie hellénistique d'Aï Khanoum (Afghanistan)," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 107, 315-381. [English translation of excerpts will be made available.]

November

Wednesday 2nd

Rea, J., R. C. Senior and A. S. Hollis (1994) "A Tax Receipt from Hellenistic Bactria," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 104, 261-280.

Clarysse, W. and D. J. Thompson (2007) "Two Greek Texts on Skin from Hellenistic Bactria," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 159, 273-279.

Topic 9: Kanishka the Great and the Kushans

Friday 4th

Harmatta, J., B. N. Puri and G. F. Etemadi eds. (1994) *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia. Vol. 2, The Development of Sedentary and Nomadic Civilizations: 700 B.C. to A.D. 250.* Paris: UNESCO. Chapter 11, The Kushans.

Monday 7th

Wednesday 9th

Sims-Williams, N. and J. Cribb (1996) "A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4, 75-142. [Skip philological commentary (bulk of article) and confine reading to inscription translation and historical remarks.]

Fraser, P. M. (1982) "Palamedes at Baġlan," *Afghan Studies* 3/4, 77-78.

Topic 10: Greeks, Indians, Hellenised Indians and Indo-Greeks

Friday 11th

Monday 14th

Karttunen, K. (1997) *India and the Hellenistic World.* (Studia Orientalia 83.) Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society. Chapter 3: Ancient Diplomacy.

Thapar, R. (1997) *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas. Revised edition.* Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1: The Background and the Sources.

Wednesday 16th

Callieri, P. (1995) "The North-West of the Indian subcontinent in the Indo-Greek period. The archaeological evidence," in A. Invernizzi (eds.), *In the Land of the Gryphons: Papers on Central Asian Archaeology in Antiquity*, 293-308. (Monografie di Mesopotamia 5.) Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere.

Rapin, C. (1995) "Hinduism in the Indo-Greek Area: Notes on Some Indian Finds from Bactria and on Two Temples in Taxila," in A. Invernizzi (eds.), *In the Land of the Gryphons: Papers on Central Asian Archaeology in Antiquity*, 275-291. (Monografie di Mesopotamia 5.) Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere.

Topic 11: Gandhara and Graeco-Buddhist Art

This topic will be taught mostly using catalogue images, and museum visits if possible (to be confirmed).

Friday 18th

Errington, E. A. and J. Cribb eds. (1992) *The Crossroads of Asia: Transformation in Image and Symbol in the Art of Ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Cambridge: Ancient Iran and India Trust. [Museum catalogue, for reference.]

Monday 21st

Khan, N. A. (1990) "A New Relief from Gandhāra Depicting the Trojan Horse," *East and West* 40, 315-319.

Wednesday 23rd

Thanksgiving recess. No classes.

Friday 25th

Thanksgiving recess. No classes.

Topic 12: Archaeology, War, Politics and Cultural Heritage, c. 1922-2011

Monday 28th

Wednesday 30th

Olivier-Utard, F. (1997) *Politique et archéologie: Histoire de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (1922-1982)*. Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations. [Translated excerpts will be made available.]

December

Friday 2nd

The following are museum/exhibition catalogues (relevant pieces/captions will be gone through in class, but participants may peruse in advance if they wish):

Hiebert, F. and P. Cambon eds. (2008) *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic. [Other editions of this catalogue are available, from the exhibitions in Paris, London, etc.]

Tissot, F. eds. (2006) *Catalogue of the National Museum of Afghanistan, 1931-1985*. (Arts, Museums and Monuments Series.) Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

Monday 5th

Lecuyot, G. and O. Ishizawa (2006) "NHK, Taisei, CNRS: a Franco-Japanese collaboration for the 3D Reconstruction of the Town of Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan," in Robert Vergniquex and Caroline Delevoie (eds.), *Virtual Retrospect 2005: Proceedings of the conference Virtual Retrospect 2005 / Actes du colloque Virtual Retrospect 2005*, 121-124. Bordeaux: Editions Ausonius. [Or just search for 'Ai Khanoum 3D' on YouTube to see excerpts from the original documentary.]

Wednesday 7th

Friday 9th

Monday 12th

General discussion, review, and presentations.