

Deity Represented by the Ai Khanoum Foot Fragment: An Archaeological, Iconographic, and Historical-Religious Analysis

I. Introduction

- **Setting the scene: Ai Khanoum, a Hellenistic City in Central Asia**
 - Ai Khanoum, meaning 'Lady Moon' in the Uzbek language, stands as a significant archaeological site in the Takhar Province of northeastern Afghanistan.¹ Situated at the strategic confluence of the Amu Darya River (the ancient Oxus) and the Kokcha River, this Hellenistic city held a vital position within the ancient landscape of Bactria.¹ Its location likely offered considerable advantages in terms of agricultural potential, control over riverine routes, and access to resources from the nearby Hindu Kush mountains, including the famed lapis lazuli mines of Badakhshan.¹ This favorable geography contributed to Ai Khanoum's development into a crucial military and economic hub for the rulers of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom from its founding around the early 3rd century BC until its eventual destruction circa 145 BC.¹ The city's growth appears to have occurred in several phases, with initial expansion possibly commencing under the patronage of Seleucus I Nicator or his successor, Antiochus I Soter, key figures in the early Seleucid Empire.¹
 - The Greco-Bactrian Kingdom emerged as a prominent Greek state in Central-South Asia following the fragmentation of Alexander the Great's empire and the subsequent weakening of the Seleucid hold on its eastern territories.⁶ Despite its considerable distance from the Mediterranean heartlands of Greek culture, the kingdom maintained a distinct Hellenistic character for more than a century, evidenced by its urban planning, architectural styles, language, and religious practices.⁴ This kingdom served as a crucial intermediary between the Greek world and the cultures of the East, fostering a unique environment for cultural and religious exchange that left a lasting impact on the art and beliefs of the region.⁸
 - Within the urban fabric of Ai Khanoum, the 'Temple with Indented Niches' (French: "temple à niches indentées") stood as a significant religious sanctuary.¹ Situated prominently on the city's main thoroughfare, in close proximity to the palatial complex, the temple's location underscores its importance in the religious life of Ai Khanoum.¹ Archaeological investigations indicate that this temple was constructed by the early rulers of the Diodotid dynasty upon the foundations of an earlier structure dating back to the

Seleucid period, suggesting a continuity of sacred space and religious significance at this location.¹

II. Archaeological Context: The Temple with Indented Niches

- **Discovery and Excavation of the Temple**

- The rediscovery of the long-lost city of Ai Khanoum occurred in 1961, quite unexpectedly, when the King of Afghanistan, Mohammed Zahir Shah, while on a hunting expedition, noticed the intriguing remains of a Corinthian column.² This fortuitous observation brought the site to the attention of the wider world and initiated the process of archaeological investigation, highlighting how chance encounters can sometimes lead to significant historical revelations.⁴
- Systematic excavations at Ai Khanoum commenced in 1964 under the direction of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA), with the renowned archaeologist Paul Bernard leading the efforts until 1978.¹ Paul Bernard's meticulous work and insightful publications have been instrumental in shaping scholarly understanding of Ai Khanoum as a major center of Hellenistic culture in Central Asia.³ Unfortunately, the outbreak of the Soviet-Afghan War in 1979 brought an abrupt end to these extensive excavations, preventing the full exploration of the site and its many remaining mysteries.⁴

- **Architectural Features of the Temple**

- The Temple with Indented Niches was identified as a substantial square structure elevated on a 1.5-meter high podium, distinguished by its prominent indented niches adorning the 6-meter high walls.¹ These niches were a key architectural feature, with a single niche flanking each side of the main entrance and an additional four niches sculpted into each of the temple's remaining sides.¹ This unique design suggests a departure from conventional Greek temple architecture, potentially reflecting local Bactrian or broader Central Asian architectural traditions, or perhaps serving a specific religious function distinct from typical Greek sanctuaries.
- The temple's architectural style represents a fascinating synthesis of Greek and Oriental (specifically Central Asian and Mesopotamian) influences.⁸ The presence of indented niches and a three-stepped platform are features commonly associated with the architectural styles of Mesopotamia and its successor cultures.¹ Despite these clear Oriental elements, archaeological evidence indicates that Greek deities were indeed worshipped within this temple, highlighting the complex interplay of cultural and religious traditions at Ai Khanoum.¹⁸ This fusion of architectural styles underscores the broader phenomenon of cultural interaction and potential religious syncretism that

characterized the Hellenistic period in this region.

- The temple complex included a courtyard enclosed by buildings on three sides, featuring a wooden colonnade supported by pedestals of Oriental design on its southwestern side.¹ The entrance to the temple from the main street was marked by a porch adorned with columns in the distyle in antis style, a characteristic feature of Greek architecture.¹ The integration of these distinct architectural elements within the same religious structure further emphasizes the syncretic nature of Ai Khanoum.
- Unlike typical Greek temples, which often featured open, columned structures, the Temple with Indented Niches possessed a flat roof and a floorplan that bore a closer resemblance to the architectural traditions of Central Asia and Mesopotamia.¹³ This deviation from standard Greek temple design might indicate an adaptation to the local climate or reflect specific religious beliefs and practices that differed from those prevalent in the Greek mainland.²¹

- **Other Significant Finds within the Temple**

- Beyond the architectural features, excavations within the Temple with Indented Niches yielded a variety of significant artifacts, including libation vessels used in ritual offerings, intricately carved ivory furniture and figurines, terracotta sculptures, and a remarkable singular medallion known as the Ai Khanoum plaque.¹ These finds provide valuable insights into the religious rituals, artistic styles, and material culture associated with the temple and its worshippers.
- The Ai Khanoum plaque, a silver disk with exquisite gold detailing, depicts the Greek goddess Cybele in a chariot drawn by lions, accompanied by the goddess Nike.⁵ This artifact is particularly notable for its fusion of Greek cultural elements, such as the chlamys worn by the deities, with Oriental design motifs, including the static poses of the figures and the presence of a crescent moon.⁵ The plaque has been lauded as "the most important work [of] the Greco-Oriental style," highlighting the unique artistic synthesis that flourished in Ai Khanoum.⁵ The discovery of this plaque, prominently featuring another major deity, Cybele, within the same temple where the foot fragment was found, raises intriguing questions about the temple's primary dedication and the potential for syncretic worship practices at the site.

III. The Discovery and Initial Interpretation of the Foot Fragment

- **Discovery of the Marble Foot Fragment**

- The marble foot fragment in question was unearthed in 1968 during the ongoing excavations at the Temple with Indented Niches, part of the extensive

work undertaken by the French archaeological team under Paul Bernard's leadership.¹¹ The precise year of this discovery is crucial for situating it within the broader context of the archaeological findings at Ai Khanoum.

- The discovered artifact is the fore portion of a left foot, clearly depicted wearing a sandal, and measures an impressive 27 centimeters in length.¹¹ This substantial size immediately suggested that it belonged to a colossal statue, estimated to have been two to three times larger than life-size.¹¹ The sheer scale of this presumed cult statue underscores the significance of the deity it represented within the religious landscape of Ai Khanoum.

- **Paul Bernard's Identification of Zeus**

- The primary basis for Paul Bernard's identification of the deity represented by the foot fragment as Zeus rested on the distinctive decoration of the sandal straps, which featured two winged thunderbolts.¹¹ Bernard, as the director of the excavations, recognized the thunderbolt as a preeminent attribute of the Greek god Zeus, the ruler of the Olympian pantheon, making this a compelling initial clue to the statue's identity.¹¹
- Further supporting this identification was the observation that the sandal itself was of a typically Greek form, consistent with footwear depicted in Greek art and worn by Greek figures.¹¹ This detail reinforced the Hellenistic character of the statue and suggested a connection to Greek religious iconography.
- Bernard also noted that the statue was likely an acrolith, a sculptural technique common in Greek art, particularly around the estimated time of the temple's construction (circa 250 BC).¹¹ Acrolith statues featured marble for the head, hands, and feet, while the remainder of the body was typically fashioned from less costly materials like unbaked clay over a wooden framework.¹¹ Bernard himself posited that the perfection of the foot's carving indicated the work of a Greek sculptor.¹¹
- Finally, Bernard considered the dimensions of the temple's cella, the inner chamber where the statue would have been located, suggesting that it was appropriately sized for a seated figure.¹¹ This posture aligns with common depictions of Zeus enthroned in majesty found on Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coinage, where he is often shown holding a sceptre in his left hand and an eagle, symbolizing Victory, in his outstretched right hand.¹¹

IV. Iconographic Analysis of the Foot Fragment

- **Detailed Examination of the Sandal**

- The sandalled left foot fragment exhibits straps adorned with a combination of decorative motifs: palmettes, roses, and, most significantly, two winged

thunderbolts.¹¹ While the winged thunderbolt is a powerful indicator of Zeus, the presence of palmettes and roses might also hold symbolic weight within the broader Hellenistic context or potentially reflect local Bactrian artistic preferences. Further research into the prevalence and symbolism of these motifs in the art of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom could yield additional insights into the statue's intended meaning and potential syncretic elements.

- **Significance of the Winged Thunderbolt in Greek Iconography**

- In the Greek pantheon, the thunderbolt is unequivocally the most recognizable and potent attribute of Zeus, the king of the gods.⁶ It symbolizes his supreme power, his dominion over the sky and weather, and his role as the ultimate arbiter of justice and order.⁶ The consistent association of the thunderbolt with Zeus across a vast array of Greek mythology, literature, and artistic representations firmly establishes its iconographic significance. The presence of this distinct motif on the Ai Khanoum foot fragment provides compelling evidence for its connection to the worship of Zeus.
- The coinage of the Greco-Bactrian and subsequent Indo-Greek rulers frequently featured depictions of Greek deities, with Zeus being a particularly favored subject.¹¹ These numismatic representations often portray Zeus in a majestic pose, typically standing or enthroned, wielding his characteristic thunderbolt and sometimes accompanied by the goddess Nike, the personification of Victory.⁶ The prevalence of Zeus on royal coinage underscores his importance within the religious and political landscape of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, further supporting the identification of the Ai Khanoum foot fragment as belonging to a statue of this principal Greek deity.

V. Historical-Religious Context of Ai Khanoum

- **The Greco-Bactrian Kingdom: Cultural and Religious Influences**

- Ai Khanoum, as a major urban center of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, exhibited a strong Hellenistic cultural presence, evident in its infrastructure, including a large gymnasium (one of the largest in the ancient world) and a theatre capable of holding thousands of spectators.² The city's layout, residential architecture featuring colonnaded courtyards, and even the construction of its defensive walls followed Greek styles.⁴ Furthermore, inscriptions in the Greek language, such as the inscription containing Delphic maxims found at the heroon of Kineas, attest to the continued importance of Greek language and philosophical traditions within the community.⁶
- Archaeological evidence from Ai Khanoum confirms that Greek deities were indeed honored within the city's temples and throughout its public spaces.⁶ While the architecture of some temples, including the Temple with Indented

Niches, displayed a blend of Greek and local styles, the dedication and worship of Greek gods remained a significant aspect of the city's religious life.⁸ Statues, such as the bronze statuette of Herakles discovered at the site, further corroborate the presence and veneration of the Greek pantheon.⁶

- **Prevalence of Greek Deities in Bactria**

- The coinage of the Greco-Bactrian kings provides a rich source of information regarding the deities officially recognized and likely worshipped within the kingdom.⁶ A diverse array of Greek gods and goddesses appear on these coins, including Zeus, Apollo, Athena, Herakles, Poseidon, Nike, Hermes, Dionysus, Tyche, Helios, and Artemis, indicating a broad adherence to the Greek pantheon by the ruling elite and likely a significant portion of the population.⁶ Zeus, in particular, was a prominent figure on these coins, often depicted in a powerful stance wielding his thunderbolt, suggesting his continued importance as a supreme deity.⁶
- The discovery of a bronze statuette of Herakles within the Temple with Indented Niches at Ai Khanoum serves as tangible archaeological evidence supporting the textual and numismatic records of Greek deity worship in the region.⁶ This find reinforces the idea that the inhabitants of Ai Khanoum, despite their geographical distance from Greece, actively maintained and participated in the worship of their ancestral gods and heroes.

- **Potential for Religious Syncretism in Ai Khanoum**

- Ai Khanoum was not solely a Greek city; it was a vibrant and cosmopolitan center where Greeks interacted with local Bactrian and Indian populations, fostering an environment ripe for cultural and religious exchange.⁸ Archaeological discoveries at the site have yielded artifacts originating from various parts of the ancient world, including Mesopotamia, India, and even China, highlighting the city's role as a node in extensive trade networks.⁴ This diverse demographic and interconnectedness likely facilitated the interaction and blending of religious beliefs and practices.⁸
- The Hellenistic period in Bactria, like many regions where Greek culture encountered local traditions, witnessed a significant degree of religious syncretism.⁸ Greek deities were often identified with their counterparts in the Iranian and Indian pantheons, leading to the emergence of hybrid religious figures and cults that incorporated elements from both traditions.⁸
- The Temple with Indented Niches itself provides a compelling example of this cultural fusion through its architectural style, which combines elements of Greek design with features more characteristic of Central Asian and Mesopotamian temple architecture.⁸ This architectural syncretism suggests that the temple may have served a religious community with a similarly

blended identity or that local building traditions were incorporated into the construction of a Greek sanctuary.

VI. Alternative Interpretations and Syncretic Deities

• Possibility of Zeus-Mithra

- A coin issued by the Indo-Greek king Hermaios depicts a deity styled as Zeus but with sunbeams radiating from his head, an iconographic feature typically associated with the Iranian god Mithra.⁸ This numismatic evidence directly supports the syncretic worship of a deity that combined the attributes of Zeus and Mithra in the region during the later Indo-Greek period, suggesting a potential precedent for such syncretism during the earlier Greco-Bactrian era of Ai Khanoum.⁸
- Artistic reconstructions of the Temple with Indented Niches have proposed that it might have been dedicated to a syncretic form of Zeus, with Zeus-Mithra or even Zeus-Ahura Mazda being considered as possibilities.¹⁹ These interpretations arise from the temple's hybrid architectural style, the broader context of religious syncretism in Bactria, and the presence of artifacts like the Cybele plaque that showcase a blend of Greek and Oriental religious imagery.¹⁹
- Historical accounts and scholarly analysis indicate that in the Hellenistic East, Greek deities were often assimilated with their Iranian counterparts.⁵⁰ Zeus, as the supreme deity of the Greek pantheon, was frequently equated with major Iranian gods such as Ahura Mazda and Mithra.³⁴ Some scholars have even suggested that the "Zeus" worshipped at Ai Khanoum might have been primarily the local Iranian Mithra, albeit interpreted through a Greek lens.⁵⁰

• Possibility of Zeus-Ahura Mazda

- A terracotta panel dating to the later Kushan period found in Bactria depicts a majestic figure identified as Zeus/Serapis/Ohrmazd approached by a worshipper.²⁸ While this artifact postdates the Greco-Bactrian era of Ai Khanoum, it provides a clear illustration of the syncretic identification of Zeus with the Iranian supreme deity Ahura Mazda (under his Avestan name Ohrmazd) in the broader Bactrian region.²⁸ This suggests that the concept of equating the Greek and Iranian supreme gods was present in the cultural and religious landscape of ancient Bactria and could have potentially influenced the religious beliefs at Ai Khanoum.

• Possibility of the River God Oxus

- Intriguingly, Paul Bernard himself considered the possibility that the colossal statue represented by the foot fragment might have been dedicated to the river god Oxus, a deity of significant local importance given the temple's

proximity to the river.¹¹ Rivers held immense significance in ancient societies, often personified as powerful deities associated with fertility and prosperity, making this a plausible alternative interpretation.

- Archaeological evidence from Ai Khanoum reveals the presence of a temple likely dedicated to the deified Oxus River, further highlighting the river's importance to the city's inhabitants.² This dedicated sanctuary suggests that the Oxus River held a prominent place in the religious beliefs of the community, making it conceivable that a major cult statue within another significant temple could also have been associated with this vital local deity.

VII. The Cybele Plaque and its Significance

● Discovery of the Cybele Plaque in the Temple

- The Ai Khanoum plaque, depicting the goddess Cybele, was discovered in 1969 within one of the southern storage rooms of the Temple with Indented Niches during the DAFA excavation campaign.⁵ Its location, hidden between the bases of two large jars against a wall, suggests it might have been deliberately concealed, perhaps for safekeeping or due to a change in religious practices.⁵
- The plaque's imagery portrays Cybele riding in a chariot drawn by two lions, accompanied by the winged goddess Nike. Notably, the depiction incorporates several Oriental design motifs, such as a stepped altar, a parasol held over Cybele by a priest, and the presence of the sun god Helios, the moon, and a star in the upper register.⁵ This blend of Greek and Asian artistic and religious elements is a hallmark of the syncretic culture that flourished at Ai Khanoum. The parasol, for instance, is a motif with South Asian connotations, while the stepped altar recalls West Asian, particularly Iranian, examples.¹⁸

● Significance of Cybele Worship in Hellenistic Bactria

- Cybele, originating in Phrygia in Anatolia, was a major goddess in the Hellenistic world, widely associated with motherhood, fertility, the wilderness, and the protection of cities.¹⁸ Her cult spread throughout Greece and the Greek colonies, often becoming syncretized with other mother goddesses such as Rhea and Demeter.⁵⁴ Given her prominence in the Hellenistic pantheon and her connections to the wild and mountainous landscapes, her worship in Bactria, a region with similar geographical features, is certainly plausible.
- The hybrid imagery of the Cybele plaque from Ai Khanoum serves as a powerful testament to the syncretic nature of religious expression in this Hellenistic city.⁵ The fusion of Greek deities with Oriental religious symbols

and artistic styles on the plaque underscores the broader cultural and religious blending that characterized Ai Khanoum.

- Comparisons can be drawn between the finds at the Temple with Indented Niches and those from the Oxus Temple at Takht-i Sangin, another important Bactrian sanctuary.⁶⁹ The presence of similar artifacts, such as limestone purification vessels and a fragment resembling the Cybele Disk, at both sites suggests a degree of interconnectedness in religious practices and potentially a shared religious landscape across different sanctuaries within Bactria.⁶⁹

VIII. Conclusion

- **Synthesizing the Evidence for the Deity Represented by the Foot Fragment**

- The initial and strong identification of the deity represented by the colossal foot fragment as Zeus, proposed by Paul Bernard, rests primarily on the presence of the two winged thunderbolts adorning the sandal straps. This iconographic motif is a quintessential attribute of Zeus in the Greek pantheon.
- However, the architectural context of the Temple with Indented Niches, which exhibits a unique blend of Greek and Oriental styles, along with the broader historical-religious context of Ai Khanoum as a center of cultural and religious exchange, necessitates consideration of potential syncretic influences.
- Numismatic evidence from the Indo-Greek period depicting a Zeus-styled deity with Mithraic sunbeams, as well as scholarly reconstructions suggesting the temple might have been dedicated to a syncretic form of Zeus like Zeus-Mithra or Zeus-Ahura Mazda, further complicate a purely Greek identification. The possibility of the statue representing the local river god Oxus, a deity of significant importance in Bactria, also warrants consideration.

- **Most Likely Identification and Remaining Ambiguities**

- Considering the weight of the iconographic evidence, particularly the distinct thunderbolt motif, and the prevalence of Zeus in the Greek pantheon and on Greco-Bactrian coinage, it is most probable that the colossal foot fragment belonged to a statue of Zeus. However, given the strong evidence for religious syncretism in Ai Khanoum, particularly the attested worship of Mithra and the later syncretism with Ahura Mazda in Bactria, the possibility of the statue representing a syncretic form of Zeus, most likely Zeus-Mithra, cannot be entirely dismissed.
- The discovery of the Cybele plaque within the same temple complex indicates that the sanctuary might have served a broader religious purpose, potentially housing multiple cults or representing the worship of associated deities within a syncretic framework where different gods and goddesses were venerated.
- Ultimately, definitively identifying the deity based solely on a fragmented

archaeological find in a syncretic context presents inherent challenges. While the evidence strongly points towards Zeus or a syncretic form thereof, the rich and complex religious landscape of Hellenistic Bactria suggests that further discoveries and research are needed for a more conclusive determination.

- **The Complexities of Religious Interpretation in Hellenistic Bactria**

- The religious beliefs and practices in the Hellenistic East, particularly in regions like Bactria, were characterized by their fluidity and adaptability. The extensive cultural exchange between Greek settlers and local populations led to a fascinating blending of religious traditions.
- Interpreting archaeological finds from Ai Khanoum requires a careful consideration of both the Greek religious traditions brought by the colonists and the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the local Bactrian and Indian populations.
- The impact of this cultural exchange on religious expression resulted in the emergence of syncretic deities and practices, making the task of definitively identifying the figures represented in archaeological discoveries both challenging and rewarding, revealing the intricate tapestry of religious life in this ancient crossroads of civilizations.

IX. Bibliography

- Bernard, Paul. 1982. "An Ancient Greek City in Central Asia." *Scientific American* 246 (1): 148–159..¹
- Francfort, Henri-Paul. 2012. "Ai Khanoum 'Temple with Indented Niches' and Takht-i Sangin 'Oxus Temple' in Historical Cultural Perspective: Outline of a Hypothesis about the Cults." *Parthica* 14: 109–136..⁵
- Hoo, Milinda. 2018. "Ai Khanoum in the Face of Eurasian Globalisation: A Trans-Local Approach to a Contested Site in Hellenistic Bactria." *Ancient West & East* 17: 161–186..⁴⁰
- Lecuyot, Guy. 2007. "Ai Khanoum Reconstructed." In *After Alexander. Central Asia Before Islam*, edited by J. Cribb and G. Herrmann, 155–162. Oxford: Oxford University Press..⁸⁰
- Mairs, Rachel. 2013. "The 'Temple with Indented Niches' at Ai Khanoum: Ethnic and Civic Identity in Hellenistic Bactria." In *Cults, Creeds and Identities in the Greek City after the Classical Age*, edited by Richard Alston, Onno van Nijf, and Christina Williamson, 115–132. Leuven: Peeters Publishers..⁵
- Morgan, Llewelyn. 2015. "On a Foot That Walked." *Llewelyn Morgan's Blog*. October 10, 2015..¹¹
- Richey-Lowe, D. T. 2021. "Ai Khanoum: A Case Study into Material Culture as a Marker for Ethnocultural Identity and Syncretism on the Hellenistic Frontier."

Journal of Hellenistic Pottery and Material Culture 5: 45–55..³⁶

- Schlumberger, Daniel. 1965. "Le temple de Surkh Kotal en Bactriane." *Journal Asiatique* 253 (1): 127-154.
- World History Encyclopedia. "Ai-Khanoum."¹
- Wikipedia. "Ai-Khanoum."¹
- Wikipedia. "Ai-Khanoum plaque."⁵
- Wikipedia. "Greco-Bactrian Kingdom."⁶
- Wikipedia. "Paul Bernard (archaeologist)."¹⁴

Works cited

1. Ai-Khanoum - Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ai-Khanoum>
2. Greco-Bactria – Alexandria Eschate to Ai-Khanoum The concept of a flourishing Greek civilization in Central Asia - The Hellenistic Age Podcast, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://hellenisticagepodcast.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/075-greco-bactria-alexandria-eschate-to-ai-khanoum.pdf>
3. ai khanoum and greek domination in central asia, accessed May 4, 2025, https://ejournals.eu/en/journal_article_files/full_text/018ecec1-8ad5-7215-b2f8-851e3df7e675/download
4. What Became of the Ancient Greek City they Found in Afghanistan - Messy Nessy Chic, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.messynessychic.com/2023/09/01/what-became-of-the-ancient-greek-city-they-found-in-afghanistan/>
5. Ai-Khanoum plaque - Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ai-Khanoum_plaque
6. Greco-Bactrian Kingdom - Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Bactrian_Kingdom
7. Ai-Khanoum: 2 A Greek City in Bactria | PDF | Social Science - Scribd, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.scribd.com/document/269931782/Ai-Khanoum>
8. Ai Khanum, the Capital of Eucratides - World History Encyclopedia, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/165/ai-khanum-the-capital-of-eucratides/>
9. I am a commoner in the city of Ai-Khanoum, c. 170 BCE. What language would my neighbors and I have spoken? What religion would we practice? What jobs would we most likely have held? : r/AskHistorians - Reddit, accessed May 4, 2025, https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/qydhgg/i_am_a_commoner_in_the_city_of_aikhanoum_c_170/
10. Greco-Buddhism, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://solarspell-dls.sfis.asu.edu/mea/wikipedia/wp/g/Greco-Buddhism.htm>
11. On a foot that walked - Lugubelinus, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://llewelynmorgan.com/2015/10/10/on-a-foot-that-walked/>
12. Ai-Khanoum: A Greek city in north-east Afghanistan - Real History -

- WordPress.com, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://realhistoryco.wordpress.com/2018/07/12/greek-city-in-afghanistan/>
13. Ai Khanoum, 1968-1973 - The Past, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://the-past.com/shorts/the-picture-desk/ai-khanoum-1968-1973/>
 14. Paul Bernard (archaeologist) - Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2025,
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Bernard_\(archaeologist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Bernard_(archaeologist))
 15. Ai-Khanoum: The Lost Greek City in Afghanistan - La Brújula Verde, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.labrujulaverde.com/en/2024/08/ai-khanoum-the-lost-greek-city-in-afghanistan/>
 16. Ai Khanoum and Greek domination in Central Asia, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://ruj.uj.edu.pl/server/api/core/bitstreams/e2578bc1-0501-4667-928e-302a35194aaf/content>
 17. Paul Bernard (archaeologist) - Wikiwand, accessed May 4, 2025,
[https://www.wikiwand.com/en/articles/Paul_Bernard_\(archaeologist\)](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/articles/Paul_Bernard_(archaeologist))
 18. Who is represented here? The sculpture represents Herakles (Roman: Hercules). Herakles is the hero of Greek epic literature - Education, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://education.asianart.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2019/12/Afghanistan_-_Hidden-Treasures-from-the-National-Museum-Kabul.pdf
 19. The Greco-Bactrian Temple in Ai Khanoum (The Temple with Indented Niches) - ArtStation, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.artstation.com/artwork/1n9PG2>
 20. From Pella to Gandhara - Hebrew University, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://tawfeeq-shekh-ahmad.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/michaelshenkar/files/shenkar_2011_temple_architecture_in_the_iranian_world_in_the_hellenistic_period.pdf
 21. Hellas Eschate : the interactions of Greek and non-Greek populations in Bactria-Sogdiana during the Hellenistic period - UBC Library Open Collections - The University of British Columbia, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0087929>
 22. File:AiKhanoumPlateSharp.jpg - Wikimedia Commons, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AiKhanoumPlateSharp.jpg>
 23. Ai-Khanoum plaque - Wikiwand, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://www.wikiwand.com/en/articles/Ai-Khanoum_plaque
 24. (PDF) Representation of GREEK gods/goddesses in Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek visual culture - ResearchGate, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346194272_Representation_of_GREEK_godsgoddesses_in_Graeco-Bactrian_and_Indo-Greek_visual_culture
 25. Thundering Zeus: The Making of Hellenistic Bactria Volume 32 | Powell's Books, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.powells.com/book/thundering-zeus-the-making-of-hellenistic-bactria-volume-32-9780520211407>
 26. Thundering Zeus: The Making of Hellenistic Bactria (Volume 32) (Hellenistic Culture and Society) - Amazon.com, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.amazon.com/Thundering-Zeus-Hellenistic-Bactria-Culture/dp/05202>

[11405](#)

27. Thundering Zeus : the making of Hellenistic Bactria : Holt, Frank Lee - Internet Archive, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://archive.org/details/thunderingzeusma0000holt>
28. Zeus god art hi-res stock photography and images - Alamy, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/zeus-god-art.html>
29. Zeus god painting hi-res stock photography and images - Alamy, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/zeus-god-painting.html>
30. Zeus sculpture wall relief plaque ancient Greek god replica, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.ancientsculpturegallery.com/zeus-plaque.html/>
31. Paul Bernard – Northcoast Antiquarian, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://northcoastantiquarian.com/tag/paul-bernard/>
32. The Greek kingdoms of Central Asia - UNESCO Digital Library, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000097859>
33. Greek Gods in the East: Hellenistic Iconographic Schemes in Central Asia, Stanco, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/G/bo17107930.html>
34. RELIGIONS IN THE KUSHAN EMPIRE Religious life in Bactria before the Kushan conquest - UNESCO, accessed May 4, 2025, https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/sites/default/files/knowledge-bank-article/vol_II%20silk%20road_religions%20in%20the%20kushan%20empire.pdf
35. Poseidon: in Bactria - Encyclopædia Iranica, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/poseidon-in-bactria>
36. Ai Khanoum: A Case Study into Material Culture as a Marker for Ethnocultural Identity and Syncretism on the Hellenistic - Archaeopress, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://archaeopresspublishing.com/ojs/index.php/jhp/article/download/781/419/8377>
37. Western, Eastern, Both, or Neither?: Translocalism as Alternative Approach to Syncretism and Hybridity in Hellenistic Bactria - DSpace, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/437078>
38. The Greco-Bactrian Temple in Ai Khanoum (The Temple with Indented Niches) - Malcolm Quartey, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://malcolmquartey.artstation.com/projects/1n9PG2>
39. Faith's Frontiers: An Exploration of Religious Syncretism and Cultural Adaptation in the “Guanyin/Madonna and Child” Painting - MDPI, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/16/1/36>
40. AI KHANUM IN THE FACE OF EURASIAN GLOBALISATION: A TRANS-LOCAL APPROACH TO A CONTESTED SITE IN HELLENISTIC BACTRIA* - BaSaR, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.basar.uni-freiburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Ai-Khanum-in-the-face-of-Eurasian-globalization-AWE17.pdf>
41. Ai Khanoum: A Case Study into Material Culture as a Marker for Ethnocultural Identity and Syncretism on the Hellenistic Frontier - Archaeopress, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://archaeopresspublishing.com/ojs/index.php/jhp/article/view/781>
42. -1- From Northern Afghanistan to Xinjiang, Hellenistic influences in the history of a

- Yuezhi-Kushan burial - IRIS, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://iris.unive.it/retrieve/e4239ddb-b5ec-7180-e053-3705fe0a3322/E-Dubbin%20Tillya%20Tepe%2C%20Taxila%20Institute%20MIUR.pdf>
43. The founder's shrine and the foundation of Ai Khanoum - ResearchGate, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291114790_The_founder's_shrine_and_the_foundation_of_Ai_Khanoum
 44. Exploring Ai Khanoum: Afghanistan's Ancient Greek City - YouTube, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dfYimlRsK8&pp=0gcJCfcAhR29_xXO
 45. Greco-Buddhism - Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Buddhism>
 46. Money and Identity: The Socio-Political Power of Ancient Coinage and the Emergence of Greco-Bactrian Culture, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://web.sas.upenn.edu/discentes/2023/10/01/money-and-identity-the-socio-political-power-of-ancient-coinage-and-the-emergence-of-greco-bactrian-culture/>
 47. Greco-Buddhist syncretism? : r/Buddhism - Reddit, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://www.reddit.com/r/Buddhism/comments/sggszi/grecobuddhist_syncretism/
 48. Research Assignment of Ai Khanoum | Ancient History - Year 11, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.thinkswap.com/au/qce/ancient-history/year-11/research-assignment-ai-khanoum>
 49. Ai-Khanoum - Pinterest, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://www.pinterest.com/flora_1316/ai-khanoum/
 50. IN EASTERN IRAN: THE TIME OF THE GREEK KINGDOMS (c. 250-50 B.C.) The political and geographical horizon1 In the middle of the th - Brill, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://brill.com/display/book/9789004293915/BP000008.pdf>
 51. Panel with the god Zeus/Serapis/Ohrmazd and worshiper - The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/327830>
 52. The Local River God Oxus-Wakhsh in Pre-Islamic Bactria - Association for Iranian Studies, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.associationforiranianstudies.org/content/local-river-god-oxus-wakhsh-pre-islamic-bactria>
 53. Hellenistic religion - Mystery Cults, Syncretism, Polytheism | Britannica, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hellenistic-religion/History>
 54. Cybele - Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cybele>
 55. Cybele : r/Hellenism - Reddit, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.reddit.com/r/Hellenism/comments/1cbqkvv/cybele/>
 56. An Argument Against Syncretism in Hellenismos - HellenicGods.org, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.hellenicgods.org/an-argument-against-syncretism-in-hellenismos>
 57. 2.3 Syncretism and the relationship between Greek and Roman pantheons - Fiveable, accessed May 4, 2025,

- <https://library.fiveable.me/greek-and-roman-religion/unit-2/syncretism-relationships-greek-roman-pantheons/study-guide/TFED8ZUxuf5Mkd1n>
58. Hellenistic religion - Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_religion
 59. Jesus and the Mystery Religions - Everyday Exiles, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://everydayexiles.com/jesus-and-the-mystery-religions/>
 60. One Man's God: Syncretism and the Gods - The Other Side blog, accessed May 4, 2025,
<http://theotherside.timsbrannan.com/2021/02/one-mans-god-syncretism-and-gods.html>
 61. Do you consider Cybele, Ops, Rhea , Magna Mater as the same goddess?? - Reddit, accessed May 4, 2025,
https://www.reddit.com/r/Hellenism/comments/kcexcp/do_you_consider_cybele_ops_rhea_magna_mater_as/
 62. Cybele - World History Encyclopedia, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.worldhistory.org/Cybele/>
 63. Cybele - New World Encyclopedia, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cybele>
 64. Originally A Phrygian Goddess | PDF | Ancient Greek Religion - Scribd, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://de.scribd.com/document/52940207/Originally-a-Phrygian-goddess>
 65. Cybele - Wikiwand, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.wikiwand.com/en/articles/Cybele>
 66. Cybele - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, accessed May 4, 2025,
http://taggedwiki.zubiaga.org/new_content/d49f89607d394c2f9c23cfb02625bd0e
 67. CYBELE CULT - Ancient Greek & Phrygian Religion, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.theoi.com/Cult/KybeleCult.html>
 68. Cybele - Livius.org, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.livius.org/articles/religion/cybele/>
 69. Votive Practices at the Temple of the Oxus, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://thevotivesproject.org/2021/09/17/temple-of-the-oxus/>
 70. Theocritus's Urban Mimes "nsd0e288" - UC Press E-Books Collection, 1982-2004, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://pub-ucpec2-prd.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft4p3006f9&doc.view=content&chunk.id=nsd0e288&toc.depth=1&anchor.id=d0e1667&brand=eschol>
 71. Alexander in the East - Biblical Archaeology Society, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-near-eastern-world/alexander-in-the-east/>
 72. The Archaeology of the Hellenistic Far East: A Survey - WordPress.com, accessed May 4, 2025,
<https://hellenisticfareast.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/mairs-2011-hfe.pdf>
 73. A Complete Bibliography of Scientific American: 1980-1989 - CiteSeerX, accessed May 4, 2025,

<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=ab137821213794d87bed2914ae805e58a2530f4e>

74. Eastern Hellenism and Related Areas of Ancient Art and Archaeology The Library of Professor Paul Bernard, Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA) - Ars Libri, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.arslibri.com/collections/BernardLibrary.pdf>
75. Full text of "Encyclopedia of The Ancient Greek World" - Internet Archive, accessed May 4, 2025, https://archive.org/stream/EncyclopediaOfTheAncientGreekWorld/Encyclopedia+of+the+Ancient+Greek+World_djvu.txt
76. ABRREVIATIONS - University of Washington, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/weilue/bibliography.html>
77. the greco-bactrian mirage: reconstructing a history of hellenistic bactria - ARCHIVE, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://uwarchive.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/kirk-rappe.pdf>
78. Scientific American, December, 1982 - WKBK Home Page, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.wkbpic.com/wkbx/SA/1982/1982-12-01.pdf>
79. Ai Khanoum Temple with Indented Niches and Takht-i Sangin Oxus Temple in Historical Cultural Perspective : Outline of a Hypothesis about the Cults - Francfort, Henri-Paul - Torrossa, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://www.torrossa.com/en/resources/an/2634580>
80. Ai Khanum, palace - Vici.org, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://vici.org/vici/19322/>
81. Layout of the Temple with Indented Niches. (Mairs, 2013, 117). - ResearchGate, accessed May 4, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Layout-of-the-Temple-with-Indented-Niches-Mairs-2013-117_fig4_350955868
82. An archaeological whodunnit | Lugubelinus, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://llewelynmorgan.com/2015/09/21/an-archaeological-whodunnit/>
83. Ai Khanoum, the Capital of Eucratides in Ancient Afghanistan - Brewminate: A Bold Blend of News and Ideas, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://brewminate.com/ai-khanoum-the-capital-of-eucratides-in-ancient-afghanistan/>
84. About: Ai-Khanoum - DBpedia, accessed May 4, 2025, <https://dbpedia.org/page/Ai-Khanoum>