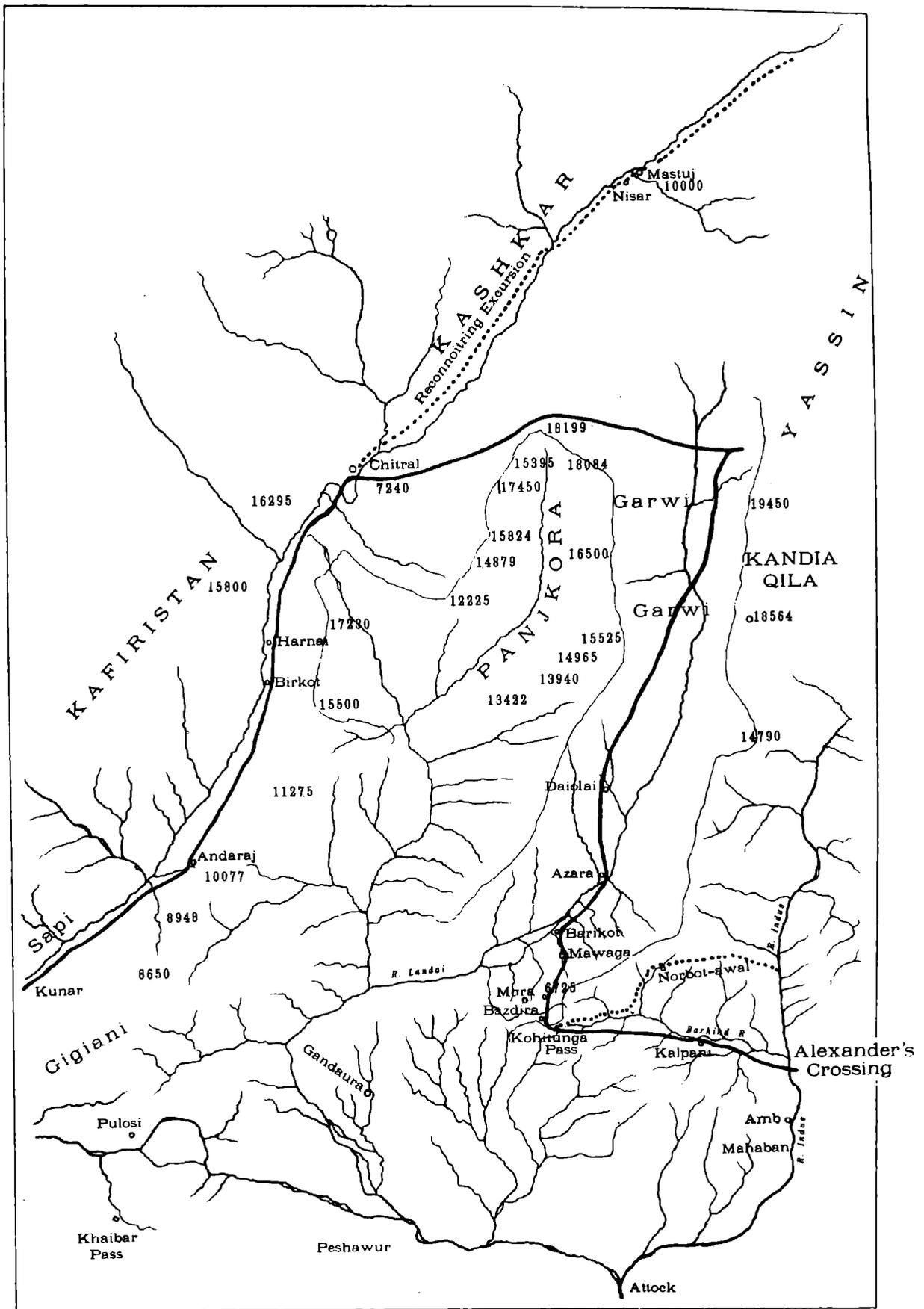


THE ROUTE BY WHICH ALEXANDER
ENTERED INDIA.

BY
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ROUTE OF ALEXANDER'S ARMY THROUGH KAFIRISTAN, CHITRAL, AND SWAT.

The course and heights of the mountain ranges are indicated by figures.

ART. XX.—*The Route by which Alexander entered India.*
By FREDERIC PINCOTT, M.R.A.S.

THE interesting and scholarly volume of Mr. McCrindle, recently published by A. Constable and Co., invites an attempt to settle more precisely the line on which Alexander reached the bank of the Indus. Mr. McCrindle loses the clue when Alexander reaches Nikaia. This place he is inclined to fix somewhere near Bagrâm, and he thinks that a part of Alexander's troops then passed through the Khaibar to the district called Peukelaôtis, somewhere near Hashtnagar on the river Landai. The formation of the country makes such a course improbable; but Mr. McCrindle admits that the geography of Kâfiristân, Chitrâl, and Swât is too little known to enable him to trace the course of the Macedonian army at this point. I will here try to supply that information.

Alexander is known to have moved from Balkh, and to have proceeded through Kâfiristân, Chitrâl, and Swât, and thence to have got to the Indus somehow. From Balkh he would naturally traverse the Salalang Pass, and there he would find two courses open to him; for he could either cross the Chârikâr Pass and advance on Kâbul, or he could descend the valley of the Kâbul river. Alexander seems to have often selected river-valleys, both on account of the water and on account of the generally easier character of the ground. In the case in point, there was in one direction a lofty pass before him at Chârikâr, leading southerly to unknown regions; and in the other direction a descending river-valley, leading easterly in the direction in which he wished to go. There can be little doubt as to which route he would prefer. By descending the banks of the Kophên

or Kâbul river, he would pass through Kâfiristân, in agreement with the course generally accepted, and at the same time he would quite avoid the city of Kâbul; and this explains the otherwise curious fact that that important city is not named in the narrative.

Alexander is then described as proceeding along the Kophên as far as Nikaia; and he there made a stand and sacrificed to the goddess Athêna, and summoned to submission "Taxiles and the chiefs on this side of the river Indus." It is evident that Nikaia was some strategical position on the course of the Kâbul river; and no place could better demand the actions ascribed to Alexander than Jalâlâbâd. Gen. Abbott considers that Nangnihar, five miles from Jalâlâbâd, marks the site of Nikaia. At Jalâlâbâd the Chitrâl and Kâbul rivers join, presenting two valleys, one easterly direct to the Indus, the other north-easterly up the Chitrâl river. Now we know that Alexander wished to cross the Indus at the highest practicable point, because he thought such a passage would be more easily effected than one across a wider part of the river. Such an intention would lead him to prefer the valley of the Chitrâl, the very path he is believed to have taken; but in conformity with his principle of not leaving an unsubdued enemy in his rear, he would seek to secure the Kâbul valley before moving northward from Jalâlâbâd. This caused him to summon "Taxiles and the chiefs on this side of the Indus"; and, having secured their obedience, he divided his force, sending part of it through the lands of these chieftains to Peukelaôtis, directing his generals, "when they reached the Indus," to make the necessary preparations for crossing. It is evident from this that Taxila and Peukelaôtis comprised land on the *western* side of the Indus; probably including the district between the Kâbul and Barhind rivers. The Barhind joins the Indus a few miles above Amb, and the Kâbul river joins forty or fifty miles below that place. This agrees with the opinion of General Cunningham that Peukelaôtis represents the capital of Gandhâra, which he places to the east of the

river Landai. There is, indeed, a village still called Gandaura in the bend of the Landai, about fifteen miles from that river's bank. There is also a village called Pulosi, about twenty-five miles west of the Landai, in the direct line of advance from Jalâlâbâd. This *Pulosi* may be the *Peukelaôtis*; but, whether this be so or not, the course of the narrative clearly indicates that the advanced division of Alexander's army moved in the direction of the Kâbul valley, and reached the Indus either through the Khaibar to Attock or by the Kâbul river-passes to the neighbourhood of Amb, occupying the country to the north and south of that place.

We are then told that Alexander took personal command of the other divisions of his army, and, taking with him some Agrianian auxiliaries, advanced into the country of the Aspasians, the Gouraians, and the Assakenians. We may be sure that Alexander considered that the detachment which he personally commanded was the more adventurous and important of the two. It was, probably, an attempt to find a higher point at which to cross the Indus, and therefore demanded the intelligence and responsibility of the leading mind.

Alexander is then said to have pursued a hilly and rugged route along the course of the Khoês, which he had difficulty in crossing. The river Khoês is what is now called the Kunâr or Chitrâl river; and on the Jalâlâbâd side the valley is narrow (from one to three miles wide), irregular, and intersected by mountain streams. On the eastern side of the river the valley-bed is five or six miles wide, tolerably smooth, and free from the interruption of streams. Having crossed the stream he rode on in advance with a small detachment, and hastily attacked "the first city" that came in his way. This city I take to be Kunâr, from its important position at the bend of the river; and it is on the side of the stream on which Alexander then was. After capturing this place he advanced to Andaka. About thirty miles higher up the valley beyond Kunâr, and on the same bank of the river, there is a village still

known as Andaraj. It is, at least, curious that just where we should expect to find Anda-ka we really meet with Anda-raj. But it is still more remarkable to note that Andaraj is close to the spot where the Chitrâl river bifurcates, one branch trending to the north-west, the other to the north-east. We are told that at Andaka Alexander divided his force, leaving part under Krateros to subdue the chiefs in that neighbourhood, while he pushed on himself up the "river Euaspla, where the chiefs of the Aspasiens were." As the main object of Alexander was to cross the Indus we may be sure that he moved up the north-eastern branch, and this is the branch which leads up to the town of Chitrâl. It may have been the opinion of the Greeks that the Khoês swept round to the north-west into the heart of Kâfiristân, and that the north-eastern stream was a tributary, the name of which they give as Euaspla.

We next read that "after a long march he reached, on the second day, the city of the Aspasian chief." The name of the city is not given; but it is related that a severe struggle took place in its vicinity. It happens that thirty-five miles above the bifurcation of the Khoês stands the present village of Bîrkot, or the "fort of heroes," which is strongly suggestive that, at one time, it was an important position, and possibly the scene of some famous exploit. A distance of thirty-five miles would also represent "a long march" to a place reached "on the second day."

Alexander then moved on to a place called Arigaion, which means "the snake-town." Ten miles beyond Bîrkot there is a village called *Har-nai*, which certainly looks like the modern form of *Ari-gaion*; for both names mean "the snake-town."¹ Alexander thought this place "an advantageous site," and had it fortified and garrisoned. About twelve miles above Harnai the Chitrâl valley narrows to about fifteen miles in width, with mountains on the right hand 17,230 feet high, and on the left hand 16,295

¹ The termination *nai*, *nih*, or *nî*, is a Tâzik term, equivalent to the Sanskrit *gâon*.

feet. It may thus be supposed that Alexander considered Harnai a fitting station for the command of this narrow passage between the hills. A nearer position than Harnai is not likely to have been selected; for we are told that the barbarians had fled to the mountains, and, therefore, to place the garrison within the gorge itself would expose it to constant attacks. Alexander then marched to the place where his enemy had taken refuge, "and on reaching a certain mountain encamped at its base." This agrees with my deduction that he advanced twelve miles beyond Harnai, and pitched a temporary encampment among the high mountains to his right and left.

From this encampment Ptolemy was sent "a considerable distance in advance to reconnoitre," and he came back with the report that the camp-fires of the enemy outnumbered those of Alexander. It is evident from this that the Macedonians then had before them the main body of the Aspasians; and it is curiously confirmatory of this to find that thirty miles beyond Harnai, or eighteen miles from where I suppose Alexander's temporary encampment to have been, there stands the town of Chitrâl itself, which, no doubt then as now, was the principal station in the whole valley. We are told that the struggle here was particularly severe, for the people were "by far the stoutest warriors in that neighbourhood." The name of the place confirms this statement, for Chitrâl is not improbably a corruption of *Kshatriya-âlaya* or *Kshatrâlaya*, "the abode of soldiers."

"He then marched to invade the country of the Assakenians," is the next statement. Mr. McCrindle is of opinion that the Assakenians are represented by the *Aspin* of Chitrâl and the *Yashkun* of Gilgit, not far from the positions I am here assigning to them. Attention is particularly called by the Greeks to the numerous cavalry of the Assakenians; and it is certain that *Assa* stands for the Pali *assa* (Sanskrit *aśva*) "a horse." In confirmation of this it may be pointed out that the valley beyond Chitrâl widens out to between forty and fifty miles of

valley-bed, and such a width of ground is sufficient for cavalry movements.

It is here that Curtius introduces the wonderful episode of Nysa. Arrian seems to have regarded the affair as somewhat apocryphal, and records it separately in a subsequent chapter. But if we look at the configuration of the ground here, we shall see that the valley had risen to a height of 7240 feet at Chitrâl, and Alexander could see that it continued to rise to much higher elevations in front of him. He must surely here have realized the impracticability of the route he was pursuing, and this would cause him to push on with a small following to Nysa (precisely as described) really to reconnoitre the ground, and satisfy himself on the point. About 45 miles beyond the encampment at Chitrâl, there stands a village now called Nisâr, close to the larger station of Mastaj. The ground here is about 10,000 feet high, and from here the vast eminences of the Great Pamir would stand in all their stupendous magnificence before Alexander; and he would see the valley where he stood still rising to the Baraghil Pass, at 12,000 feet of elevation. Here he could not fail to perceive the utter hopelessness of his task; but with politic generalship he may have connected the name Nysa with Dio-nys-os, and arranged a festivity for his troops to create the impression that he had accomplished the object of his expedition. He is then said to have personally visited the mountain which the Indians call Meros; and this can be no other than the famous Mount Meru of Sanskrit and Pali literature, which is allocated somewhere in the Great Pamir range. This was a good idea to circulate in order to account for a further inspection of the valley, as high as he thought it useful to go towards the Baraghil Pass. It is certain that, after this episode, no further progress was made in a north-easterly direction; and Alexander must then have wished to strike eastwards from the latitude his troops had then attained. Such a wish would have led him to approach the Yassîn country, in precise accord with what

Arrian tells us he actually did. His first act was to pass through "the country of Gouraians," and to cross the river of that country. Now in moving almost due east from the town of Chitrâl, where Alexander's encampment was stationed, and passing round the bases of the Panjkora mountains, it is absolutely necessary to pass through a district still called Garwî, and to cross the river running down its centre, in order to reach Yassîn. It may thus be taken as certain that Garwî is the ancient Gouraian area, and that the river mentioned is the upper course of the Landai, an opinion which Mr. McCrindle himself holds.

We now read, in Arrian's narrative, that "Alexander marched first to Massaga, which was the greatest city in those parts." This sentence obviously implies a break in the operations. Action against Yassîn was stayed, until Alexander had "first" subdued Massaga. The position of this place must, therefore, be somewhere off the line of advance which we have been tracing. As the northerly route had been abandoned, we must look for Massaga in the Shîna country, to the south-east of Garwî, in the direction of the Indus. Alexander's object was to reach the Indus, and his progress up the Chitrâl valley had convinced him that the road he sought could not be found that way. The stream of the Landai, however, would appear to lead to the Indus at the highest practicable point, and it would conduct him in a south-easterly direction to the Shîna country. Here we find a tract still known as Kandia Qila, "the fort of Kandia," which may be a relic of the name of Alexander, and may indicate the locality where the siege and storming of Massaga took place. This would be territory occupied by the Assakenians, and would thus agree with the Greek narrative. I am, however, inclined to think that Kandia Qila merely represents a defensive work to protect the head of the Garwî valley, and that Alexander marched down the valley to crush an enemy which he now found on his right flank. By entering the Garwî or Landai

valley he had got to the eastern side of the Panjkora ranges, which cut him off from his line of advance, and from his supports, by a mountain barrier varying from 13,000 to 16,000 feet high. The people who occupied the lower portion of this valley (which is really the district of Swât) were to Alexander a fresh body of foes, who had hitherto been screened from his attack by the chain of mountains which he had just turned. It was, therefore, impossible for him to move into Yassîn, even had he been inclined to do so, until he had subdued the foes he then found on his right flank. This I take to have been the necessity which induced him "first to attack Massaga, which was the greatest city in those parts"—the parts alluded to being the district of Garwî.

Curtius relates, at this point, that Alexander marched to Daedala, and then on to Acadira, that he then crossed the Choaspes, left one of his generals to subdue Beira, and advanced himself upon Mazaga. Now by descending the Landai valley from the Garwî district, at a distance of 20 miles, we meet with a village still called Daiolai (=Daedala), and 15 miles further on is the town of Azara (=Acadira). These two places are on a tributary of the Landai which joins the main stream near Azara. Here Alexander, and any other general, would naturally cross the river, as related, in order to go south-east; for the main stream at this point trends away rapidly to the west. On crossing the river he would find in his path, at a distance of ten miles, a place still called Bari-kot, or "the fort of Bari," which, in all probability, is the Beira mentioned by Curtius. Five miles still further south brings us to a spot called Mawaga; and although I do not pretend that Mawaga is the exact locality of Massaga, still what follows will show that it could not have been very far from the spot.

Immediately Massaga was captured Koinos was despatched to Bazira, because Alexander was "convinced that the inhabitants would capitulate on learning that Massaga was captured." Bazira, therefore, cannot be very far

away. It happens that just ten miles south of Mawaga there is a place still called Bazdira, and it is a position which commands the pass of Koh-i-tanga, leading into India. The advantage of seizing a place which commanded the pass into India is obvious; and that Bazira was just such a place as Bazdira now is, is evident from the description, that "it stood on a very lofty eminence . . . and the people trusted to the strength of their position, and made no proposals about surrendering."

Still more remarkable is the statement that three Greek officers were sent "to another city, Ora" (called Nora by Curtius), which was to be blockaded until Alexander could arrive. Now five miles to the west of Bazdira there is a village called Mora, which is almost certainly the Ora or Nora of the Greeks.

Ora and Bazira were speedily subdued; but the inhabitants fled to the rock Aornos for safety, and to make there their last stand. It is evident that Aornos must be in the near vicinity of Massaga, Ora, and Bazira; for we are told that Alexander fortified these three places in order to command the district while he captured the rock Aornos free from interruption. These circumstances make the identification of Aornos with Mahâban impossible, for the latter place is forty miles distant from the scene of operations. It is not reasonable that the fugitives should have retired to such a distance for the purpose of defending their country; nor could it have mattered to Alexander what they did so far away on the further side of the mountain pass. Mahâban is, also, only two-thirds of the height recorded of Aornos. The locality of Aornos, however, remains to be settled; for it was an important place, and evidently the key of the whole district. We are told that Alexander fortified and garrisoned Massaga, Ora, and Bazira, for the purpose of covering his operations against the rock of Aornos; therefore the rock must be some eminence having three such places in its neighbourhood. Now if the places I indicate, viz. Mawaga, Mora, and Bazdira, be referred to in the map, we shall find that

they occupy the three corners of an isosceles triangle; Mora and Bazdira being about five miles apart at the base, and Mawaga ten miles from each of them at the apex. In the centre of these three places, at about four miles in a northerly direction from both Mora and Bazdira, and about six miles south from Mawaga, there is a remarkable eminence 6725 feet high, almost exactly corresponding with the height of Aornos as given by Arrian, that is, eleven *stadia* or 6674 feet 3 inches English measure. It is almost inconceivable that a rock of exactly the right height should exist, with three places around it so well situated for the purpose to which Alexander put them, and bearing names greatly resembling those mentioned by the Greeks, and that it should be all mere fortuitous chance. When all the places I have indicated are traced upon the map it will be seen that they succeed each other in geographical order, and do not compel Alexander's troops to fly over mountains, or to be in two districts a hundred miles apart at the same time. His route passed up the rising valley of the Chitrâl until its impracticability as a means of reaching the Indus became evident; and then it turned round the bases of the northern end of the Panjkora mountains, down the valley of the Landai into Swât, ultimately reaching Bazdira at the northern side of the Koh-i-tanga Pass. It deserves remark that the positions I assign to Massaga and Arigaion agree exactly with those assigned to them in the new *Atlas Antiquus*, by Justus Perthes of Gotha.

The only statement against this conclusion is that made by Curtius, viz. that the rock of Aornos was washed by the waters of the Indus. Curtius, it is generally admitted, was not very accurate as to details; and as Arrian, the most careful of these chroniclers, omits all mention of the Indus in connection with this rock, we may conclude that there is no foundation for this improbable statement. Diodorus, it is true, says, with apparent precision, that Aornos was washed "on its southern side" by the Indus; but he also, in the next chapter, states that, after the siege, Alexander

marched away from the rock, performed some military feats, and "then came to the river Indus." The course of the narrative shows that it is simply impossible for Aornos to have been washed by the waters of the Indus; for as soon as Alexander had blockaded Aornos, he sent a division of his troops to the Indus, which, on its way, captured and garrisoned a place called Orobatis. It is perfectly clear from this that Aornos was not on the bank of the Indus, or troops would not have been sent from that place in order to reach the Indus. There must, also, have been sufficient interval to allow of marching some miles, and the garrisoning of a town as a link of communication. Modern Bazdira is at the pass of Koh-i-tanga, and as Alexander therefore held possession of that pass, what could be more natural for him to do than to use it, and thereby reach the river-valley of the Barhind, the banks of which would lead his troops to the Indus in thirty-five miles. Curtius distinctly says that Alexander cleared the defile of enemies for the passage of his troops, thereby showing that some mountain pass was actually availed of at this juncture.

Along this route, and at about twenty miles from Bazdira, there is a place called *Narbat-awal*, and this might represent the *Orobat-is* of the ancients. The detachment of troops marched on beyond this place Orobatis towards the Indus, and they probably effected a junction with the detachment previously sent down the Kâbul river, and began to prepare a bridge for crossing the Indus. Alexander then gave over command of the district "on this side of the Indus" (including the rock Aornos) to Nikanor, and marched himself towards the Indus. This is again conclusive evidence that Aornos was not on the banks of that river. Furthermore, in the course of this march, Alexander received the submission of the city of Peukelaôtis, "which lay not far from the Indus." Then comes the statement, "He was accompanied on this occasion by Kôphaies and Assagêtes, the local chiefs. On reaching Embolima, a city close adjoining the rock of Aornos, he there left Krateros, with a part of the army, to gather into the city as much

corn as possible," etc. It is perfectly clear that Aornos could not have been on the bank of the Indus. There must have been sufficient space between the rock and the Indus for the operations of an army in the district of Peukelaôtis. It does not seem to have attracted notice that the expression, "he was accompanied on this occasion," almost implies that Alexander paid a flying visit to the Indus to see how his detachments were progressing with the bridge; and he might also have wished to clear the country around them. This would also account for the blockade of Aornos. It was his ambition to capture the place himself; he therefore simply shut it in, leaving the command of the district to Nikanor, while he proceeded to traverse the ground between Bazdira and the Indus. When he had completed his tour, Arrian recorded the fact that "he was accompanied on this occasion" by the local chiefs; thereby apparently closing the episode. The phrase "on reaching Embolima" would, therefore, mean that Alexander had returned to the siege of Aornos, which he had temporarily abandoned. Krateros is then posted where he could collect stores, and the siege of Aornos began in real earnest. Embolima may possibly be some place on the Landai river not far from Mora, in what is now called the Mûsâ-khail district. It deserves notice, however, that Curtius makes the advance upon Embolima *follow* the capture of the rock Aornos. As soon as the rock was secured the bulk of Alexander's troops passed over into the valley of the Barhind, and reached the Indus not far from Amb. Arrian says that after the capture of the rock Alexander himself marched towards the Indus, "and the army, going on before, made a road for him, without which there would have been no means of passing through that part of the country." On this General Abbott remarks: "This road was probably the path leading among the precipices above and along the torrent of the Burindu"—in exact conformity with my deduction.

The foregoing route agrees in every detail with the careful statements of Arrian, and traces the course of

Alexander step by step, along a natural and practicable path, finding places along the route which punctually correspond with the Greek narrative in distance, position, geographical character, and name. Furthermore the track is in no place disconnected, nor does it cross impossible ground; but it leads up and down traversable valleys, and round the bases of mountains, and across well-known passes. It shows that Alexander entered India about eighty miles above the Khaibar Pass, and crossed the Indus somewhere near Amb, and not at Attock.
