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Notes on the Problematical Sequence of Alexander's Itinerary in Swat A Geo-Historical Approach

by LUCA M. OLIVIERI

Introduction

The recent publication of the preliminary results of the excavations conducted by IsMEO at Bir-kot-ghwandai (Barikot, Swat, Pakistan) (Callieri et al. 1992) makes a once much debated subject (dating back to the end of 19th century, starting with Baratieri 1879), to which no new material or studies have been contributed for some time, topical again. In fact, the site the Italian archaeologists have been investigating owes the attention it has attracted partly to its identification with one of the places the historians of Alexander mention in connection with the 'invincible' Macedonian's advance into India (Fig. 1). The fortified centre of Bazira (or Beira) was actually besieged and captured by Coenus, Alexander's lieutenant, during the brief military campaign Alexander waged in Assacenic territory, on the threshold of India.

Although the expedition against the Assacenic is clear from a strategic angle, up to now it has not been possible to reconstruct the route exactly. In fact, many points are still obscure. This is primarily due to the divergent accounts consulted by Flavius Arrianus (Arrian) and Quintus Curtius Rufus, the two main historians. One of these concerns the identification of the site of Bazira, a base of vital importance in the reconstruction of Alexander's operations in Swat.

Alexander's historians also mention another place, which we will briefly take into consideration, and this is Ora, a site that has been identified with one the Italian Archaeological Mission of IsMEO has surveyed in the past.

Archaeology's Answers: The Identification of Bazira and Ora

A. Stein identified the Assacenic fortified centre at Bazira with the site of Bir-kot-ghwandai in 1929 (Stein 1930: 27-29), a hypothesis G. Tucci later supported after he had carried out an extensive survey of Swat in 1955, which laid the basis

(*) Diacritical signs are not used in the text with the exception of some terms written in italics or those in quotation marks.

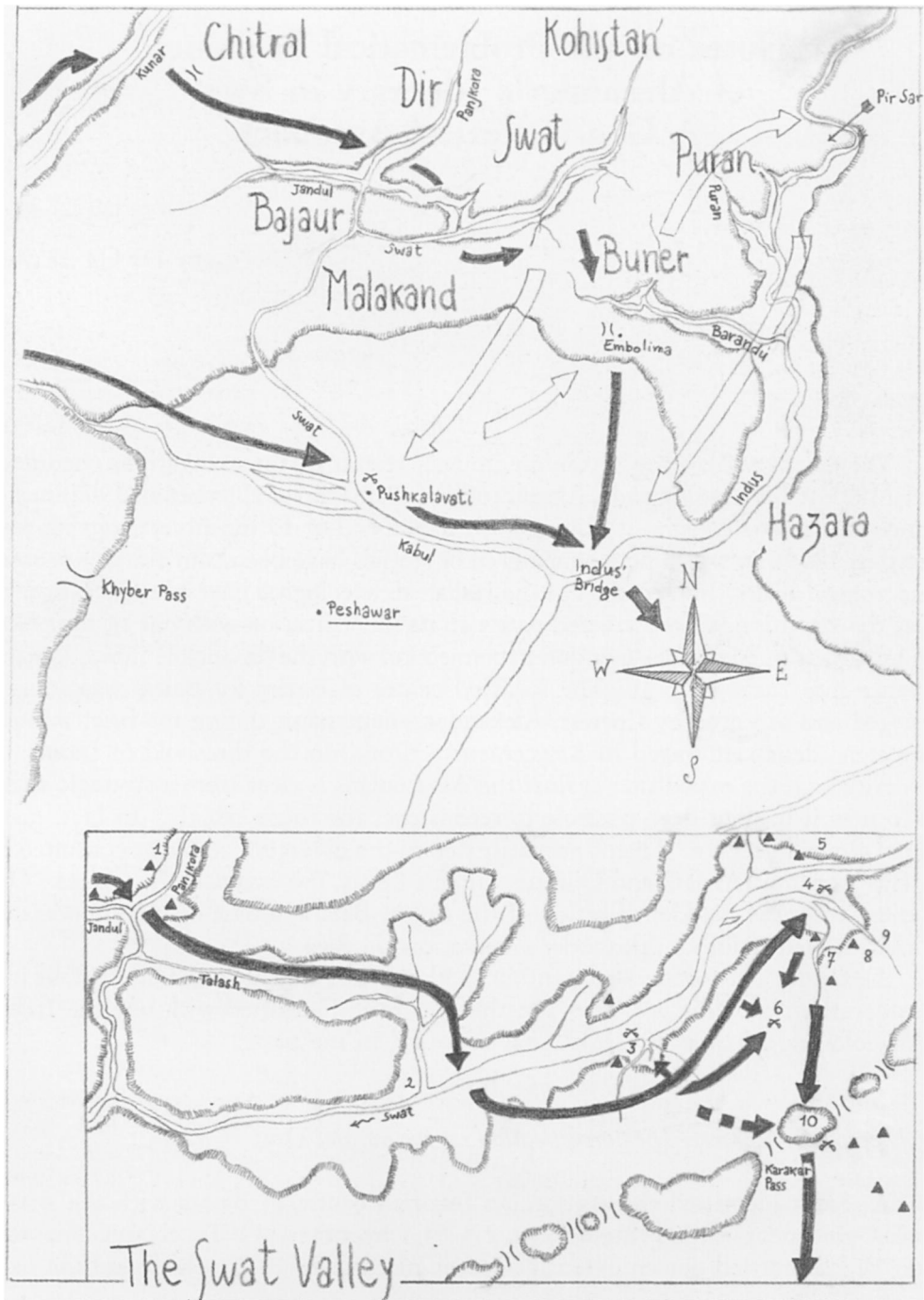


Fig. 1 - General plan of Alexander's operations and those of Hephæstion and Perdikkas in the NWFP according to the present reconstruction (black) and according to the reconstruction based on Arrian's text (white). Key: 1. = Balambat; 2. = Damkot; 3. = Barikot; 4. = Area of Mingora; 5. = Aligrama; 6. = Udegram; 7. = Barama; 8. = Loeban II; 9. = Kalako-deray; 10. = Mount Ilam; triangles = proto-historic necropolises of Period VII.



Fig. 2 - Barikot hill seen from the east-southeast with the course of the River Swat visible in the background. DepCsNegL 17470/24. (Photo by L.M. Olivieri).

for all the subsequent research done by IsMEO in the region (Tucci 1958: 296, n. 28) ⁽¹⁾. Thus the *urbs opulenta*, described by Curtius Rufus, thanks to the work of the two great scholars now has an exact location on today's map of the world.

Bir-kot-ghwandai, situated in the middle stretch of the Swat Valley, is on a steep hill (Pashto, *ghwandai*) of limestone and mica-schist (943 m a.s.l.) rising perpendicularly above the left bank of the Swat River (Fig. 2). Since the site

⁽¹⁾ For an overall picture of the historical geography of the area, the fullest treatment is to be found in: Berthelot 1930; Caroe 1958; Dani 1967, 1968-69; Eggermont 1970, 1984; Foucher 1902; Stacul 1975; Stein 1921, 1929, 1930; Tucci 1940, 1958, 1963a, 1963b, 1977; Tusa 1979; Wheeler 1962.

According to Tucci, who concurred with Stein, the identification of the site is beyond question, particularly as the modern Pashto toponym of *Bir-kot* ('castle of Bir') retains the ancient name of Beira or Bazira (Stein 1927: 431-32; 1930) for which the form Vajira(sthana) mentioned in a Sanskrit inscription from Barikot and dated *c.* to the 10th century A.D. is also known (Tucci 1958: n. 28; Callieri & Filigenzi 1984: 485; Pandey 1973; Eggermont 1984).

Mention is made of Bazira in the classical world in a Latin opuscle of the 4th century A.D., based on Arrian's *Anabasis*, on the 'Itinerary of Alexander the Great', dedicated to the Emperor Constans I, where it figures as Baziphora (McCrinkle 1901: 152 ff.).

dominates the whole of the middle stretch of the valley its position is of particular strategic importance. Placed about half way along the road that goes from Bajaur (i.e. from Afghanistan) via Buner to the Indus River Valley, it guards the pass to Buner, the Karakar Pass, the most important one in Swat, dominated by the granitic upthrust of Mount Ilam (2811 m a.s.l.). From its southern foothills an arid plain spreads out (Pashto, *mianā*), bounded on the east by the Barikot torrent (formed by the union of the Karakar and Kandak torrents), and on the south by the valley of the Kandak torrent, both tributaries of the Swat River. Today, near the junction of the Kandak and the Karakar Rivers, stands the village of Bir-kot (or, according to the Urdu toponym in general use: Barikot: 34° 41' N., 72° 14' E.; 799 m a.s.l.; see Marussi 1964: 89).

A series of archaeological surveys and trial excavations have been carried out in the plain by the IsMEO Mission from 1975 onwards, but only in 1984 was a systematic plan of excavation begun ⁽²⁾. Up to now the successive excavation campaigns have brought to light a vast urban settlement of the historical period covering an area of about 4.5 ha. The duration of this settlement, founded in the Indo-Greek era and characterised by monumental city walls with rectangular bastions at regular intervals (the distance between the bastions, 27.5-29 m, seems to be equivalent to 100 Attic feet, i.e. 1 *plethron* [cf. Olivieri 1993: 105]; one bastion on the southwest corner has a pentagonal plan), spans a chronological period starting in the 2nd century B.C. to the 4th-5th centuries A.D. (Callieri et al. 1992: 33-35) (Figs. 3-4). Further signs of life have been observed on the slopes and on the hilltop (which however seems to have been used as an acropolis or *basileion* in the preceding ages as well, see Tucci 1958: 298), corresponding to the Hindushahi period (8th-11th centuries A.D.) and in the eastern part of the plain up to the 16th century A.D.) (Callieri et al. 1992: 45).

The existence of a proto-historical settlement, prior to the construction of the Indo-Greek city, became apparent from the first trial trenches of the excavation. The earliest phase of this settlement may be identified with an area further south of the one subsequently occupied by the city and apparently dates from the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C.

The most ancient phase, represented by stone constructions and wells, can be attributed to Period IV of the pre-protohistorical sequence in the Swat Valley (c. 1700-1400 B.C.); structures have come to light belonging to the last phase of Period V (c. 10th-8th B.C.) and to the Periods VII and VIII (c. 5th-3rd B.C.) (Filigenzi & Stacul 1985: 433; Stacul 1985a: 310; 1987). The necropolis which has come to light in the Kandak Valley is connected to this phase of the settlement, but so far only a small portion of it has been excavated (Tusa 1981: 111-18). It would seem that the stratigraphical evidence, relative to the two structural periods brought to light

⁽²⁾ See Callieri 1984, 1990, 1992, 1993a, b; Callieri & Filigenzi 1984; Callieri, Filigenzi & Stacul 1990; Callieri et al. 1992; Faccenna, Callieri & Olivieri 1992; Olivieri 1993; Filigenzi & Stacul 1990; Stacul 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1989.

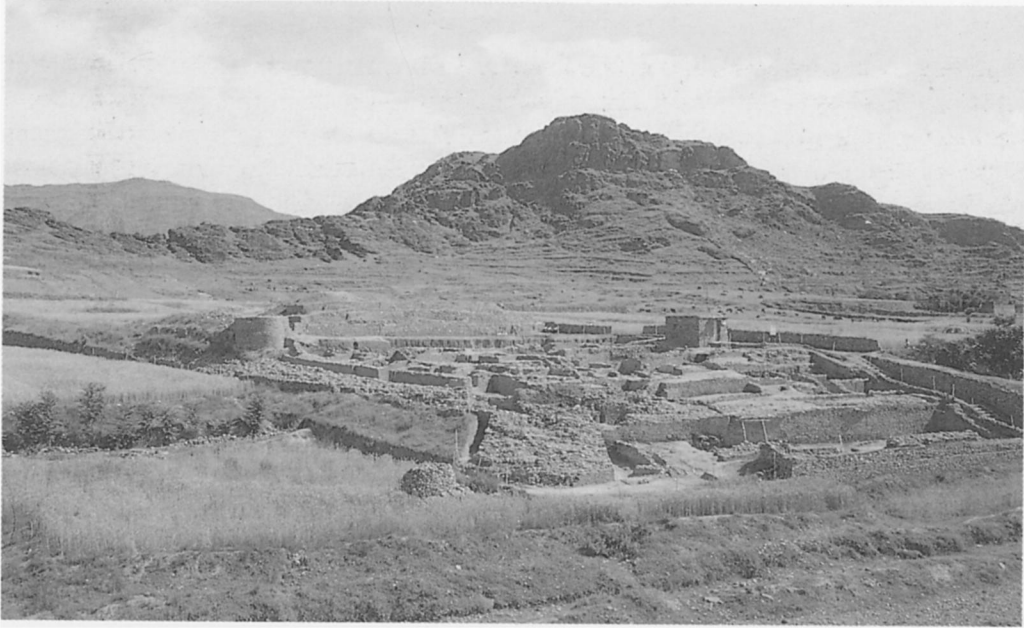


Fig. 3 - Barikot, trench BKG 4/5, at the end of the excavation: the foreground shows the remains of the ancient city with the defensive walls and the southwest corner bastion. In the background is the hill which dominates the site. (Photo L.M.O.).

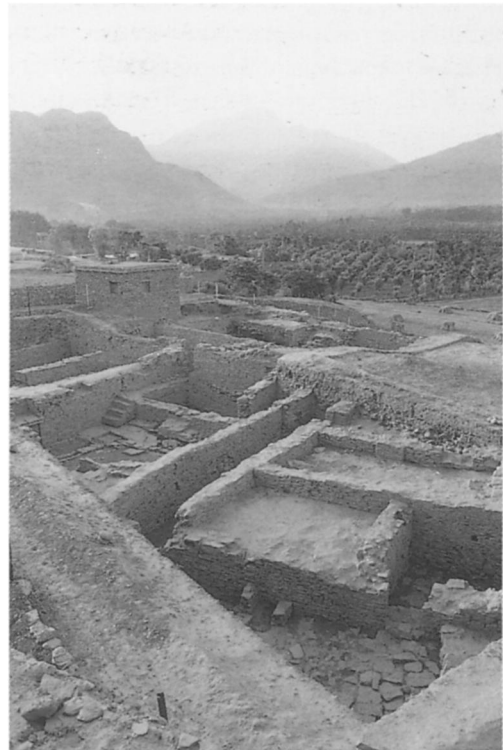


Fig. 4 - Barikot, trench BKG 4/5, in 1991: view of the ruins of the Kushano-Sasanian period. Mount Ilam is in the background. (Photo L.M.O.).

immediately beneath the walls of the Indo-Greek city, fits into the framework of the later phase. The elevations of the constructions dating from this period appear to have been built with unbaked clay or unbaked bricks resting on stone foundations semi-embedded in the earth. The latter of these two structural periods shows a phase of destruction of the settlement with the demolition of buildings while the city walls were in the process of being built: unbaked bricks from the previous constructions were in fact re-employed to fill in the trench for the foundations of the city walls (Callieri et al. 1992: 15).

Nevertheless the information provided by the excavations to date is not yet sufficient to prove categorically that the archaeological site of Bir-kot-ghwandai actually corresponds to the Bazira mentioned by Alexander's historians. In fact archaeology's answer is to leave the question to be decided by future and more fortunate research, in view of the fact that Arrian affirms that after it was conquered Bazira was completely fortified. The date initially proposed for the walls, 4th-3rd centuries B.C., led to this fortification being compared with the Macedonian ones (Callieri 1989; 1993b). This hypothesis was later discounted on account of the numismatic finds yielded by the excavation campaigns of 1990-93 which demonstrated an Indo-Greek origin. It is evident therefore that so far traces of this important episode in the life of the site have not yet been found; nonetheless it is necessary to highlight some points which should not be underestimated in considering the problem.

The first point is that the existence of a flourishing settlement of some importance at the time of Alexander's expedition has been proven. Another regards the type of building technique used in the constructions of the more recent proto-historical phase which the excavation has revealed. This is similar to that described by Curtius Rufus for the defences of Massaga, the capital of the Assacene kingdom, which also included Bazira and therefore, *mutatis mutandis*, can be extended to our site too: 'The city is enclosed by a wall [...] the lower section of which is built of stone, while the upper part is of unbaked bricks [...]' (*Hist. Alex.*, VIII 10, 25-26) ⁽³⁾. This type of building technique, in an analogous context, was used at Aligrama, a site about 20 km further to the north along the right bank of the Swat River, a fact, which as we shall see later is of extreme interest (Tusa 1979). In dealing with the question of whether or not the Macedonians were responsible for the fortification of the site another set of factors must be taken into consideration. Actually, the chronological sequence shown by the dig proves that the proto-historical settlement continued undisturbed for another century after the Macedonian siege without any sign of the traumatic events one would have expected to find according to Alexander's chroniclers. There is no sign of a sudden cultural mutation, nor have any traces of violent destruction or of reconstruction been found, excluding the construction of the walls of the Indo-Greek city which belong to a much later date.

⁽³⁾ '[...] murus urbem complectitur, cuius ima saxo, superiora crudo latere sunt structa'.

However, let us now look at Arrian's text and read what happened to Bazira after the Macedonian victory. First of all it states that for the centres of Ora and Massaga two Macedonian presidaries (φρούρια) were created, whereas it simply says that Bazira was fortified (*Anab. Alex.*, IV 28, 4). On this point Arrian may be taken literally since throughout the work he appears to be very well informed about the size, nature and importance of the various fortifications left by Alexander (Thomas 1974: 12). Thus, for the whole region Arrian lists seven places, including presidaries, fortified places and garrisons: Aornos, Arigaion, Bazira, Massaga, Ora, Orobatis and Peukelaotis (*ibid.*: 13). Actually, Arrian's account only states that Aornos, Orobatis and Peukelaotis were garrisoned, and it only gives the name of the Commander of Peukelaotis (IV 28, 6). The others are only mentioned as presidaries without further details, however Arrian definitely says that Bazira was fortified ⁽⁴⁾. In general, it is feasible to think that, with the exception of Aornos, Orobates and Peukelaotis, the administration of the whole region was entrusted to various tribal chiefs, who had been won over, to ensure a system of defence and control that offered the maximum advantage in this type of terrain, as was Alexander's known practice, and as the episode of Cleofis would seem to suggest ⁽⁵⁾.

The military administration of these posts, or at least of these three garrisons, was entrusted to the Hipparch Nicanor, whose satrapy, according to Arrian, extended from the Paropamisadae (Hindu Kush) to the Indus (IV 28, 6; Bosworth 1983: 37). Nicanor's governorship lasted from the Autumn of 327 B.C. to an unknown time in 326 when Sisicottus (Sandracottus), Commander of the Aornos stronghold, informed Alexander that the former had been assassinated by Assacenic rebels (V 20, 7; Eggermont 1975: 185-87; Bosworth 1983: 38). We may suppose that after a series of complicated events (cf. Bosworth 1983) by 324-323, at the latest, Macedonian control of the region was reduced to the fluvial corridor of the Kabul River dominated by Peukelaotis (*ibid.*: 45) and that the Swat Valley was definitively lost (*contra* see Callieri 1993b).

Therefore, these facts should lead to a re-evaluation of the significance of the answer that one can reasonably expect from the corresponding phase at Bir-kot-ghwandai ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁴⁾ 'The verb *teichízo* employed by Arrian, specifically means "to build a fortification wall"' (Callieri 1992: 344).

⁽⁵⁾ According to Curtius Rufus and to the information Trogus gathered, reported by Justin, once Alexander had defeated Queen Cleofis she was joined to him in matrimony. The son born of this union was also named Alexander (*Hist. Alex.*, VIII 38, 35-36; *Epit.*, XII 7, 9-11). The episode may be a metaphorical allusion to a form of subjugation imposed on the Assacenic kingdom. In point of fact Curtius Rufus maintains that the Queen's dignity was fully reinstated. On this see Tucci 1977: 51.

⁽⁶⁾ Very different was the situation of a site like that of Taxila, an authentic metropolis and capital, which, following the Macedonian occupation, became the head-quarters of an important garrison, traces of which are being brought to light (see the extremely interesting study on the skeletal remains discovered in the necropolis of Sarai Khola, Taxila, in Bernhard 1981).

Even if one does not wish to exclude the presence of a Macedonian garrison at Bazira, this could have lasted at most for no more than three or four years (always supposing that Nicanor's successors regained control and enforced Macedonian rule in Swat) or else but a few months (in the opposite case). Other more hypothetical reasons can be added to these. Based on the morphology of our site it is in fact possible to hold that both the siege and the new fortification works may have been concentrated in the hill area rather than on the plain (Olivieri in press). As regards the siege, Arrian's narrative is reassuring as he relates the difficulty Coenus had due to the inaccessibility of the site, placed high up and well fortified on all four sides (IV 27, 6). Howbeit, the importance of this episode in the history of the settlement should, in my opinion, be thoroughly reviewed to explain why it is necessary to wait until the end of the 2nd century B.C. to observe the introduction of cultural elements that are extraneous to the local *facies* (and Hellenistic to be precise), with the foundation of the fortified Indo-Greek city (7).

* * *

Further along the left bank of the River Swat, about 10 km upstream from Barikot village is the site of Udegram (Figs. 5-6). This has been identified by Stein (Stein 1930: 40) and by Tucci (Tucci 1958: n. 8) as the place Arrian called Ora, and Curtius Rufus Nora (8). Although on the whole different, Udegram's morphology has some features in common with Bir-kot-ghwandai. Today the village, situated on a plain overlooking the Swat River, is shielded at the rear by a hilly ridge which separates the Swat Valley from that of its tributary, the Saidu River. Orographically this ridge belongs to the contours of the northeastern slopes of Mount Ilam.

The plain at the back of and to the west of Udegram village (near the locality of Gogdara) has been the object of research and excavation since 1956 which have

(7) The evident mutation which took place in Period VII (5th-6th centuries B.C.) in the material cultural horizon of Swat is founded on the massive use of iron in particular (also borne out by the quantity of arms present in the warriors' graves in the necropolises of the same date), the appearance of 'pots with lugs and handles, the flat-shaped human figurines with holed eyes and ears, the stone beehive-shaped spindle-whorls, etc. [...]' (Stacul 1995: 124). On the significance and the value of this datum, see Stacul 1985b; 1990; 1993a; 1993b; 1995. The problem of the chronological place of Period VII has been amply debated (Müller-Karpe 1983; Dittman 1984; Vogelsang 1988). This Note follows the chronological sequence suggested by Stacul, which, in addition, appears to be concretely supported by the results of the excavation campaigns of 1985-1992 at Bir-kot-ghwandai. For an opinion I feel to be conclusive refer to Stacul 1985b.

(8) The present-day Pashto toponym of *Udegrām* ('village of Ude') seems to preserve the original toponym of Ora (on this see Stein 1927: 436; Tucci 1958: n. 1). A different opinion regarding the location of Ora was held by Berthelot 1930: 283 ('Les hypothèses d'Aurel Stern (*sic*), Bazira = Birkot, Ora = Oudegram, sont inacceptables, elles rapprochent beaucoup trop les deux villes [...]'). Caroe 1958: 54; on this see Eggermont 1970: 67, and also 1975: 183-85.



Fig. 5 - Udegram, the fortification line with the castle seen from the north. The peak of Mount Ilam is visible in the background. DepCSNegL 17010/37. (Photo L.M.O.).

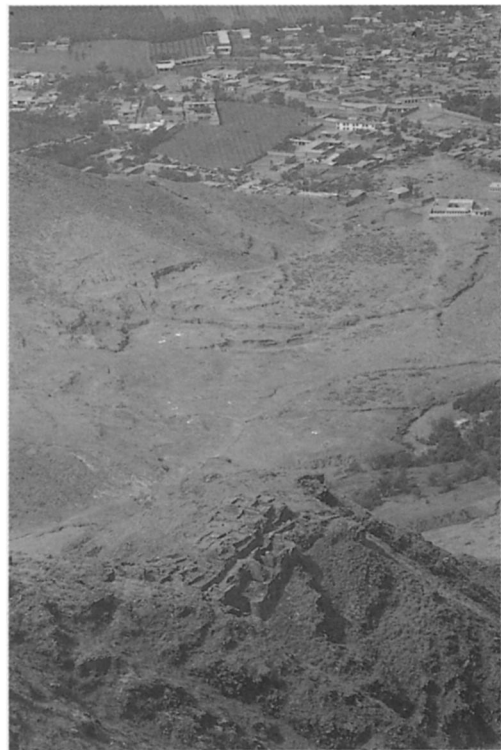


Fig. 6 - Udegram: view of the castle from the south. The plain where the ancient city stood can be seen in the background. (Photo L.M.O.).

revealed phases that almost certainly belong to the proto-historical period (at Gogdara III and at Udegram 'Bazaar' levels VIII, VII, VI) which was followed in the Indo-Greek period by the foundation of a functional urban settlement which continued into the 4th-5th centuries A.D. ⁽⁹⁾. In so far as the chronological sequence is concerned, the site bears a striking resemblance to Bir-kot-ghwandai. On a rocky outcrop, behind the plain, with characteristics that can almost certainly be identified with an acropolis, the excavations have brought to light the important remains of a fortified complex which continued to flourish into the Hindushahi period (8th-11th A.D.) and well beyond it, given that immediately at its base a mosque of the Ghaznavid period has been discovered which existed up to the 13th century A.D. ⁽¹⁰⁾. Here too, as at Bir-kot-ghwandai, archaeological research has brought to light a proto-historical settlement which appears to have existed at the time of Alexander's expedition. The argument which has been advanced for Bir-kot-ghwandai can also be applied to Udegram regarding the question of the garrison stationed there by Alexander according to Arrian (IV 28, 4).

Alexander's Route in Swat According to Arrian and Curtius Rufus

Between the early Summer and Autumn of 327 B.C. ⁽¹¹⁾, according to the authorities quoted by Curtius Rufus in his *Historiae*, Alexander entrusted the command of the main part of the army to Hephaestion and Perdikkas with orders to proceed to the Indus to construct a bridge of boats for the army to cross over (VIII 10, 2). He, on the other hand, assumed command of a smaller chosen contingent of men ⁽¹²⁾ and set out for the Indus by a higher, more northerly route, with the intention of pacifying the hill people of the Hindu Kush and Kohistan.

The road taken by Hephaestion and Perdikkas must have been what A. Foucher called the 'Grand' Route ancienne' in use throughout the whole of the 1st century A.D. by those travelling from Afghanistan to India (Foucher 1942: 41-43). This road closely followed the course of the Kabul River deviating from it only at the narrowest point at the gorges which cross the Safed Koh, and just touching, before reaching the Indus, the important site of Pushkalavati, known to the historians of Alexander as

⁽⁹⁾ On the excavations at Udegram and Gogdara see Gullini 1958; 1962.

⁽¹⁰⁾ As regards the excavation of the Ghaznavid mosque on Mt Raja Gira at Udegram, see Scerrato 1985; 1986; especially as to why the site was abandoned see Scerrato 1986: 504.

⁽¹¹⁾ In Tucci's view Alexander's expedition would have taken place in the Autumn of 327 (Tucci 1977: 42, n. 52), which is certainly a plausible hypothesis if one takes into account Arrian's reckoning (IV 23, 3) that the Macedonian Army quit Bactria in the late Spring of the same year (in particular see Bosworth 1981: 38, also Hamilton 1984: 404).

⁽¹²⁾ On the formation of this contingent see Arrian IV 23, 1.

Peukelaotis (today Charsada) ⁽¹³⁾. Later, a second road was opened, a little further to the south, which Foucher called the 'route du Khaïber' after the famous Pass. This road passed to the south of Pushkalavati (which actually seems to have gradually lost importance; cf. Wheeler 1962: 3, 6) and led instead to the city of Purushapura (today Peshawar) (Foucher 1942: 39, 43-44) ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Keeping to Curtius Rufus' narrative, after separating from Hephaestion and Perdikkas, Alexander reached the region called *Daedala* (XIII 10, 19). The identification of this toponym with the territory inhabited by the Dards is a reasonable and widely accepted hypothesis ⁽¹⁵⁾. This, for the Latin historian, was the theatre of operations. These can be divided into two phases: an initial phase during which Alexander and Ptolemy employed guerrilla tactics by making raids into the region, where Acadira is the only place mentioned; then a second phase in which Alexander, having crossed the Choaspes River, left Coenus, one of his officers (who had grown in esteem on account of his behaviour in regard to his brother-in-law, Philotas: cf. VIII 8, 17-30; II, 10-11), to lay siege to the *urbs opulenta* of Beira, otherwise called Bazira by Arrian. Alexander then went ahead to lay siege to Massaga, the capital of the kingdom (VIII 10, 19-22).

⁽¹³⁾ On the excavations at Charsada, Bala Hissar and Shaikhan Dheri, see Wheeler 1962 and Dani 1965-66. For the identification of Peukelaotis, see Badian 1987.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The last source to mention Pushkalavati is the *Babur-nama* where it speaks of the site of Hashtnagar near which Emperor Babur watched the lower course of the Swat River in the February of 1519 (Beveridge 1922: 376-77; on this toponym, see Wheeler 1962: 1). With regard to the gradual decline of Peukelaotis, Dani attributes this to natural reasons (Dani 1963: 4; also see Eggermont 1970: 70, n. 25).

The ancient site of Peshawar (Peshāwar = frontier town) is mentioned in the travel journals of Faxian (5th century A.D.), Xuanzang (7th century A.D.) and in the works of 'Utbi and al-Biruni (11th century A.D.). On the basis of the toponyms referred to in the sources an older, though not confirmed, toponym has been reconstructed: Purushapura (see Kramers 1950: xx). The site seems to have been mentioned in two Sasanian inscriptions (2nd half of the 3rd century A.D.): in the Pahlavi version of the inscription on the so-called Ka'aba Zoroastro at Naqsh-i Rostam, in which the locality is indicated as one of the eastern limits of the Empire of Shapur I, and called *pškbr*; in the Greek version it is written *paskibouron*. The subject has aroused much speculation as to whether the toponym, in the Greek form, corresponds or not to the much older reference in Herodotus to Kaspapyros (*Hist.*, III 102, 1; IV 44, 2. On this point see Kramers 1950). According to Tucci (1977: 16): '[...] Kaspapyros cannot be Peshawar, which would imply an unexplained change of the Kaspia into Paska'. If these and a few other elements are excepted (such as the great *stūpa* of Shah-ji-ki-Dheri, from where the famous reliquary of Kanishka comes), very little is known of the history of ancient Peshawar; not even the historical period in which it was founded is known, (but there is a Kharoshti inscription from Ara, near Attock mentioning the city at the time of Kanishka; see Dani 1995: 43 ff). In the last few years the University of Peshawar has been conducting some exploratory surveys within the city, which may reveal new and valuable information on the oldest phases of this important locality.

⁽¹⁵⁾ With reference to this Justin (*Epitome*, XII 7, 9) mentions the *montes Daedalos*; Herodotus records the *Dadikai* (*Hist.*, III 91, 4; VII 66, 1); Ptolemy speaks of the *Daradrai* (*Geo.*, VII 1, 42); Pliny too refers to the *Dardae* (*Nat. Hist.*, VI 68); another reference is in the *Dionysiaca* by Nonnus and in Dionysius Periegetes (see McCrindle 1901: 198, n. 2, 189). On the identification of this toponym (and of the ethnic names) connected with Dardistan see Tucci 1977 and Eggermont 1984 (also see Stacul 1979: 13-15).

By comparison Arrian's narration of the episode in the *Anabasis* appears to be much more circumstantial and rich in detail. Following the division of the army (IV 22, 7-8), he describes Alexander's and Ptolemy's incursions; the city of Andaca is named (IV 23, 5) which seems to correspond to Curtius Rufus' Acadira. However for Arrian, the theatre where these operations took place was in Aspasian territory. One reached this, according to Arrian, after having first followed and then crossed the River Choes (IV 23, 2). Once they had left the Aspasian territory behind they crossed that of the Guraeans where Arigaeum was situated⁽¹⁶⁾. In this area Arrian refers to a River called Euaspla (IV 24, 1). In point of fact, this passage is unreliable since it concerns the reconstruction of the name of a river to fill a gap in the text⁽¹⁷⁾. Still in Gurei territory, Arrian states that there was a river there which was very difficult to cross (IV 25, 7) (it was the River Gouraios also mentioned in other text: on this see below; see Stein 1927: 423, n. 4). Arrian differs from Curtius Rufus in citing Massaga as the Macedonian's prime objective. Not only because it was the largest and most important city, but because, as it seems easy to deduce from the text, it was the main obstacle that Alexander *had* to surmount in order to open his route into the Assacenian territory. Only after having conquered Massaga did he send Coenus to Bazira, and Attalus, Alcetas and Demetrius to Ora, calculating, as Arrian says, that their inhabitants would capitulate once they learned that the capital had fallen (IV 27, 5).

To return to Curtius Rufus' narrative, we see that the description of the events takes an altogether different turn. Thus leaving Coenus to besiege Bazira, Alexander went on to Massaga, '[...] ipse ad Mazagas venit', and then set in motion the operations to lay siege to Nora (Ora), entrusting it to Polysperchon. Once Alexander had gained control of the three cities without difficulty, he turned his attention to the task of conquering the heights known as Aornos, where the inhabitants of the other cities in that territory had taken refuge, leaving them deserted in the hands of the Macedonians (VII 11, 2).

In reading Arrian, we observe that there are several differences regarding this time. If, in Curtius Rufus, we can take for granted, *e silentio*, that the siege of Bazira presented no undue difficulty to the Macedonians, Arrian recounts that Coenus met, as already said, with serious difficulty in attempting to make Bazira surrender (IV 27, 6). Alexander, after having taken Massaga, decided to go to help Coenus, when a report reached him that enemy troops, commanded by Abisares

⁽¹⁶⁾ This site has been identified with modern Nawagai, in Bajaur, without any evidence to support it (Caroe 1958: 51).

⁽¹⁷⁾ Tucci, referring to Roos 1967 edition of the *Anabasis* (IV 24, 1), is extremely skeptical about the name of this river which appears to be a reconstruction to fill a gap in the text that actually would appear to refer to the name of a city since the text goes on to state '[...] where the head of the Aspasioi resides'. Therefore the integral text would have given the name of the capital of this people: '[...] other editors, with less probability, inserted here the name of the river Swät [creating a new Greek form for it]. Thus Evaspla should be deleted from the list of rivers crossed by Alexander' (Tucci 1977: 47).

— a sovereign of a more easterly region ⁽¹⁸⁾ — was trying to break the siege of Ora. So then Alexander's priority objective became Ora (IV 27, 7): Coenus then set up a line of defence aimed at preventing the inhabitants from attempting to make sorties or to desert the site, and sent reinforcements to Alexander. Thanks to Coenus' reinforcements and to the contingent from Massaga, Alexander was able to occupy Ora without difficulty (IV 27, 6). In the meantime the inhabitants of Bazira made a disastrous sortie at which the Macedonians took 60 prisoners and left 500 of the enemy dead (IV 27, 8). Finally, on learning that Ora had fallen, the inhabitants of Bazira succeeded in fleeing and taking refuge on the rock called Aornos, which is in that territory (IV 27, 9). According to Arrian's account Alexander, *on his march to Aornos*, arrived at Peukelaotis which Hephaestion and Perdikkas had already conquered (IV 28, 6; Eggermont 1970: 74). This fact is hard to explain and is doubtless due to incorrect information given to the Greek historian: but this problem will be dealt with in due course. It is only at this stage in his journey that Alexander, according to Arrian, entered Assacenic territory (IV 30, 5).

The following table may be useful to compare the geographical place names referred to in the two historians' account so far:

ARRIAN	CURTIVS RUFVS
River Choes	
	Daedala Region
Aspasians	
Andaca	Acadira
Arigaeum	
(River Euaspla)	
Guraeans	
River Gouraios	River Gouraios
	River Choaspes
	Assaceniains
Massaka	
Bazira	Beira
Ora	Nora
Assaceniains	
Peukelaotis	
	Massaga
Embolima	
Aornos	Aornos
	Ecbolima

⁽¹⁸⁾ On this see Eggermont 1970: 114-15. The name of the sovereign is mentioned (apart from Strabo, *Geog.*, XV 28) also on the occasion of the battle Alexander fought against Porus as the latter's ally (*Anabasis*, V 20, 5; *Bibl. Hist.*, XVII 87, 2; 90, 4). As Arrian cites this toponym (*Indica*, IV 12), it is perhaps a reference to the Ousara of Ptolemy (on this see Berthelot 1930: 272); see also Stein 1927: 426; it can probably be located in Hazara.

Ancient References to the Hydrography of the Region

Special importance is to be attached to ancient reports on hydrography because very often they furnish precious 'information on periods dating back to before written texts' (Stacul 1979: 23). It is a fact that the names of rivers may remain unchanged for a long time despite the mutation of populations (Georgiev 1966: 357). In addition, their importance is such that, at least as regards the Indian area, the names of entire regions very often reflect those of the rivers that crossed them.

Oddly enough in the *Indica*, Arrian shows that, as regards this region, he had knowledge of a completely different hydrography from the one described in his narrative about Alexander. In the *Indica*, the region between the Indus and Kabul (Kophen, the Kubhā in the *Rgveda*, V 53, 9; X 75, 6) was inhabited by Astaceni and Assaceni, pale-skinned Indian peoples (I 1-4; *Nat. Hist.*, VI 79), whose capital was Massaka (I 7). Another great city, called Peukelaotis, was situated not far from the Indus (I 8), and in its vicinity the River Kabul joined the Indus after having gathered the waters of the Malamantos (otherwise unknown, cf. n. 19, 20), the Soastos and the Garroios (II 11) in this order. India proper lay beyond the Indus (II 1). The remarkable thing is that none of the rivers Arrian lists here is mentioned in his history of the Macedonian's heroic deeds. The only river to be referred to in that place is the Garroios of which Arrian speaks as the Gouraios, the river that gave the name to the territory of the Gurei (which corresponds to the Gouraios of Curtius Rufus, the Gaurī, Guruhā or Garuhā in the Indian sources; see Eggermont 1970: 66, n. 11) which concordantly and logically came to be identified with the present-day River Panjkora (Stein 1921: 2, n. 2; but in particular Marquart to whom both Stein and Foucher are beholden, cf. Eggermont 1970: 66, n. 11). Further north the Parrenos and Saparnos Rivers flow into the Indus, which, I feel, Tucci was right to recognise in the Puran (in the region of the same name) and the Barandu (the major river in Buner) respectively (Tucci 1977: 43; *contra* less well expressed by Berthelot, cf. 1930: 282, n. 2). From the above it will be clear that Arrian failed to correlate the historical and geographical information in his possession, that evidently derived from different sources.

Even a cursory glance at the geography of the area will show that there are three principal valleys between the Hindu Kush and Kohistan: the Kunar Valley (a tributary of the Kabul River), the Panjkora Valley and the Swat Valley, which converge before opening into the Kabul Plain. After gathering the waters of these rivers the Kabul River pours into the Indus. This valley has a north-south orientation like the other three. Apart from the Gouraios/Panjkora, the identification of the Choes in the *Anabasis* (called Koas by Ptolemy, *Geo.*, VII 1, 42) with the Kunar seems certain (Stein 1921; Caroe 1958; Tucci 1958; Eggermont 1970). The Malamantos mentioned remains enigmatic and difficult to locate in the region ⁽¹⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁹⁾ It might be another name for one of the rivers we know, but there is no proof to support it. Eggermont has treated this question fully, in the conviction that it could be a modification of '[...] the name of the region, or town, into the name of a river' (Eggermont 1970: 108; on this also see n. 20).

Alexander entered the region near the River Choës, or Kunar, whose course he followed with his troops before crossing it. According to the Greek historian, Alexander marched along the right bank of the Kunar, then he crossed the river and arrived at Bajaur via Chitral. Here, one could insert Curtius Rufus' account where he mentions the entry into the Daedala region that formed part of the Gurei territory with the Gouraios/Panjkora River, the river Arrian did not name.

Again, with reference to the Panjkora, it should be noted that in the *Indica* Arrian appears to be speaking of the east or south of Swat, seeing that he mentions the Soastos before the Garroios (II 11). In that case, this could be explained by the fact that he might have confused the two rivers, calling the upper course of the Panjkora the Soastos, and Garroios its lower course which gathers the waters of the two rivers after they join (cf. Berthelot 1930: 279, 281, 282, n. 1).

Again with reference to the Gouraios/Garroios/Panjkora, an important passage in Strabo states that the River Choaspes converges with the Kophes (which must be the Kabul), after having flowed past the city of Gorys and therefore after having crossed the regions of Bandobene (elsewhere unknown) ⁽²⁰⁾, and the Gandaritidis, or Gandhara (*Geog.*, XV 1, 26). So, the River Choaspes, which we know from Curtius Rufus, can be associated with a toponym, Gorys, which closely resembles the ancient name of the river Gouraios/Garroios.

Similarly, Ptolemy does not refer to the Garroios/Gouraios, perhaps because he confused it, if we accept Berthelot's hypothesis (*ibid.*), with the upper course of the Swat, just as Arrian had done in the *Indica*. In Ptolemy, as in Strabo's work, we find a toponym mentioned which recalls that river name, the Goruea region, situated to the south of the Soastene (seemingly the Swat Valley), and among its cities, the site of Gorua (*Geo.*, VII 1, 42). The fact that Ptolemy places the Goruea region so far south should not surprise us: one can hypothesise that he, like Arrian, had confused the Swat with the upper course of the Panjkora/Soastos, calling the corresponding territory Soastene. In any case it should be remembered that the whole of Ptolemy's geographic representation of this area presents a strong deformation of at least 3° to the north. Proof of this is the way Ptolemy situates Poklais (evidently Peukelaotis/Pushkalavati), which he placed on the same latitude as the middle stretch of the Swat (the same deformation occurs in the case of Taxila).

Actually, Strabo's passage rather than complicating the situation opens up a possible solution to the problem. According to J. Marquart (1905: 244 ff. *non vidi*,

⁽²⁰⁾ On this regional toponym see Eggermont's interesting hypothesis. He associates it with the Oundabanda of Ptolemy (*Geo.*, V 12, 4), to the river in the *Indica*, Malamantos (see n. 18) and thereby to the city of U(n)dabhāṇḍa (Eggermont 1970: 109-10, n. 185) most probably Hund, near Attock (also see Kuwayama 1976: 403). Tucci does not regard Eggermont's hypothesis as valid because it puts the toponym too far to the east and it would therefore be inappropriate to connect this river with the Indus basin; it would seem more reasonable to locate it in the Kabul basin, as indicated in the *Indica* (Tucci 1977: 43, 45).

cit. in Stein 1921: 2, n. 2; cf. also 1938: 20, n. 2) — which also takes into account the River Euaspla (considered dubious as shown above) — the name of the River Choaspes, found in Strabo and Curtius Rufus, may be an Iranian form with a Sanskrit counterpart in the Indian sources (*R̥gveda*, VIII 19, 37) and in particular in the work of Pāṇini as Suvastu (Agrawala 1953: 42, 69), from which Soastos derives (or Soastene, as the regional toponym) in Megasthenes (frag. 9a), Ptolemy (*Geo.*, VII 1, 42-43) and in the *Indica* by Arrian (II 11). The name of this river certainly corresponds to the modern Swat, the region's most important river, which is mentioned by this name in a later period by some Chinese Buddhist pilgrims in their itineraries. Therefore, excluding Arrian's Euaspla for the above reasons there are, in my opinion, three different names known in the West to denote the same river: Gouraios/Garroios, Choaspes and Soastos. The fact that Strabo connected the Swat with the toponym of Gorys, somehow leads us to connect the Swat and the Gouraios/Panjhora, at least to the extent that it misled Strabo (and for similar reasons, also Ptolemy and Arrian in the *Indica*). In point of fact Strabo did not explicitly cite it but evidently mistook it for the Choaspes (Swat) associating it with the toponym of Gorys (*contra* cf. Berthelot 1930: 279).

To recapitulate the problem: Arrian, in the *Indica*, situated the Swat to the west or north of the Panjhora, perhaps because he confused the upper course of the Panjhora with the Swat, using the latter appellation instead for their joint course; the same author mentions the Panjhora in the *Anabasis* as the Gouraios referring to the Gurei region in the corresponding area; Strabo does not designate the Panjhora by name but associates the toponym Gorys with the Swat (Choaspes); lastly, Ptolemy does not refer to the Panjhora, but, like Strabo, associates the Goruea region and the toponym Gorua with the Swat (Soastos).

This may be explained by the fact that the two rivers join to form a single river near the borders of the present-day districts of Dir, Bajaur and Malakand Agency, which in narrow gorges (called the Gorges of Swat), crosses the orographic buttress of the Malakand Range before flowing into the Kabul River near Charsada. The confusion that has been discovered is thus shown to be perfectly understandable. Without the assistance of cartography it is extremely difficult, even today, to visualise correctly the relationship between the Swat River above the gorges and its lower course; it would be even more difficult to understand the relationship between this and the Panjhora⁽²¹⁾. In addition to all this it should be remarked that, contrary to the modern geographic denomination, to an objective observer, it is the Swat that appears to *translate* into the Panjhora River shortly above the gorges, and not *vice versa*. This is what probably gave rise to the confusion between the various appellations given to the rivers in ancient times. It is not unrealistic to hypothesise that the Gurei region, the Goruea of Ptolemy, with the city of Gorys/Gorua, corresponds to the valley of the Panjhora, in the southern Dir of today. Such an

⁽²¹⁾ This has been emphasised by numerous authors (see Eggermont 1970: 108, n. 175).

hypothesis may be further borne out by the existence of the toponym of Gur, the name of a village in the middle stretch of the Panjkora River, near the village of Panjkora in Dir District.

So far we have established some fairly definite points of reference in the hydrographic framework of Alexander's campaign in this region. Once the name of the River Euaspla is removed, the situation becomes altogether clear. Alexander first entered the region by following and then crossing the Kunar River; next he crossed the Panjkora and then the Swat which he went back up in order to attack the fortified centres of the Assaceniens.

The Whereabouts of Massaga

Many scholars, preferring Arrian's account, due to the wealth of detail (actually somewhat confused if the *Anabasis* and the *Indica* are compared), have been led to place the site of Massaga between the Panjkora Valley and that of the Swat⁽²²⁾. If, on the contrary, one follows Curtius Rufus' account, the Assaceniens capital was to be found *beyond* Bazira, and therefore right in the Swat Valley, where the two texts appear to concur in situating both Ora and Bazira.

Naturally, if one follows Arrian's account, one would search for the site of Massaga before the Swat Valley. This is the approach most scholars interested in this subject have chosen. It should be noted that apart from the historians of Alexander (cf. also *Indica*, I 8), only Strabo mentions this city, the capital of the Assaceniens (*Geog.*, XV 1, 27). In the Indian sources a comparison can be made with the Masaka region or with the River Masakavati referred to by Pāṇini and by Patañjali (Agrawala 1953: 42). Stein situates Massaga roughly in the Lower Swat (and certainly before Barikot; Stein 1921: 4; 1930); Caroe situates it before the Swat Valley, near the important Pass of Katgala (Caroe 1958: 51-53). It is, in fact, an extremely important pass because it controls the road which runs through the Talash Valley and which, for anyone coming from the west (that is to say for whoever takes the upper road from the Kunar to the Indus), it is the only possible route to take to the Swat and on towards the region of the Indus, from the point where the Panjkora enters the gorges. The Pass's exceptional importance and, consequently, that of the heights which dominate it, is evident from the imposing ruins of the Hindushahi forts which are still clearly visible on their summits⁽²³⁾. But its importance is exclusively strategic since it is hardly a suitable site for a capital. Actually, the heights, especially

⁽²²⁾ In particular this conclusion has been reached by Stein (1921; 1927; 1930), Caroe (1958), Eggermont (1970). Before Stein, Massaga was situated by many scholars in Bajaur or in the Kalpan Valley; McCrindle identified the ancient city with Mashnagar (?) in Swat (see McCrindle 1896: 194, n. 3; *ibid.*: 334-35).

⁽²³⁾ On this see Stein 1921: 4, but especially Dani 1968-69 and Abdur Rahman 1979.

on the right side of the Talash Valley (where Caroe hypothetically locates it) appear to offer a limited area, uncondusive to urban development: always bearing in mind Curtius Rufus' statement that the city had a perimeter wall built of unbaked bricks on stone foundations a good 35 stadia long (c. 6,500 m) (VIII 10, 25; and that the information was indirect and subjective; cf. *infra*, n. 27). To date the heights surrounding the Katgala Pass have not furnished evidence of proto-historical occupation if one excludes some unreliable data in connection with the site of Gumbatuna (Rahman 1979: 281) and the material from the proto-historical necropolis (not dated) at Ziarat and Charpat (Dani 1967: 323 ff.). The interesting site of Damkot, situated a little further south, is situated on an isolated hilltop which dominates the course of the Swat. Here, Pakistani archaeologists have discovered a sequence of settlements which go from the proto-historical period to the 11th century A.D. As regards the proto-historical occupation of the site (Period I), provisionally, roughly dated to the beginning of the first millennium, a sterile stratum appears to separate these phases from those dated to the 2nd century B.C. (Period 2; Rahman 1968-69: 111-15).

Tucci held a completely different opinion. Although, initially he accepted the location of the capital near Chakdarra (Tucci 1963b: 27), later he maintained — on the strength of Curtius Rufus' version — that the capital of the confederation, which gave its name to the people who made it up, the Massagenoi (*Assakenoi*), was to be found in the Swat Valley, beyond Bazira, and therefore upstream from the site of Bir-kot-ghwandai. 'If [...] Alexander left Coenus to besiege Beira (Bazira), a rich town, *urbs opulenta*, and himself went to Mazaga (Massaka) and the Choaspes is Suvastu, Swat, the doubt may arise that he crossed the river near Barikot in a place which we cannot identify and from there he reached the left bank of the Swat' (Tucci 1977: 50). But where exactly did Tucci think the city might have been located? In the vicinity of Aligrama (Tucci 1977: 42) or perhaps in the area of Mingora, which Tucci hypothesised to be the most northerly limit Alexander reached in Swat (*ibid.*: 55)? At Aligrama (Fig. 7), on the right of the Swat River, on the opposite bank to Barikot, has been discovered what can be considered to be the most extensive proto-historical site yet excavated in Swat ⁽²⁴⁾. What is more, this site (Aligrama, Period V) provides exceptional evidence of a phase of violent destruction with the discovery of human remains (Pardini 1977), hastily buried, corresponding to a phase dated to the 5th-4th centuries B.C. (Stacul & Tusa 1975: 305-8, 320; Stacul 1975: 350-51; Tusa 1979: 688). Curtius Rufus' description of the position of Massaga fits the site of Aligrama rather well, since it is situated to the west of the River Swat like Massaga was (VIII 19, 23) ⁽²⁵⁾. It likewise corresponds to the information given by the Latin historian in that it shows signs of the usual levelling work and hewing into the rock, preparatory to any building, which is supported by the archaeological evidence, and lastly, as

⁽²⁴⁾ On this site see Stacul & Tusa 1975, 1977, 1979; Tusa 1977, 1985.

⁽²⁵⁾ 'Nam, qua spectat orientem, cingitur amne torrenti, qui, praeruptis utrimque ripis aditum ad urbem impedit'.

Fig. 7 - Aligrama hill photographed from the north; the course of the Swat River can be seen in the background. (Photo L.M.O.).

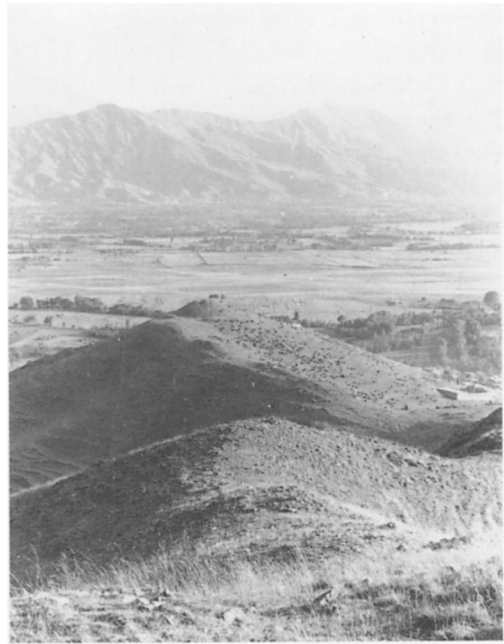


Fig. 8 - View of Buner from the southern ridge of Mount Ilam, near the Karakar Pass. (Photo L.M.O.).

shown above, by the type of building method employed (VIII 19, 24-26; Stacul 1975: 350; Stacul & Tusa 1977: figs. 11, 52; Tusa 1979: 684) ⁽²⁶⁾. The points mentioned so far acquire new meaning in the light of Tucci's affirmation regarding the present-day name of the torrent which flows into the Swat a short distance from Aligrama, Mahak, which according to the Italian scholar may not be a coincidence but actually derive from that of Massaka (Tucci 1977: 42; Stacul 1975: 351). In this case the Massaga of Alexander's time must surely have been situated upstream from Barikot, higher up the Swat Valley, almost certainly in the wide, fertile alluvial plain, formed by the confluence of the rivers Jambil, Saidu and Swat, seen to the north-west from Aligrama hill.

The Problem of Aornos

The heights of Aornos, as shown above, are situated according to Arrian's directions *near* Bazira (IV 28, 1); whereas Curtius Rufus situates them in the vicinity of some fortified centres apparently in the neighbourhood of Ora and Massaga (VIII 11, 1-2). In this instance the two sources correlate and appear to indicate that the stronghold was to be found in Swat. However, Curtius Rufus adds a detail which, in my opinion, is misleading if taken literally: namely, that at its foot, *subit*, runs the Indus (VIII 11, 7; see also Diodorus Siculus, *Bibl. Hist.*, XVII 85, 1-4; Strabo, *Geog.*, XV 1, 8). These directions led Stein to identify Aornos with Mount Pir-Sar (Stein 1927: 433; 1929: 120-54; 1930: 69 ff. and, in particular, as regards Stein's identification of Pir-Sar, see pp. 88-94) and in this he is generally followed by most scholars ⁽²⁷⁾.

⁽²⁶⁾ 'Ad occidentem et a meridie, veluti de industria, rupes praealtas obmolita natura est, infra quas cavernae et voragines longa vetustate in altum cavatae iacent'.

⁽²⁷⁾ More than anything else it is an accepted opinion that has influenced all the editors of Alexander's historians' texts. Caroe raised some doubt in his day (1958: 55; also see Eggermont 1984: 73) as well as Tucci obviously (1970) followed by Eggermont (1984). As early as 1904 Stein's keen interest in Aornos led him to explore the summit of Mount Mahaban in southern Buner, near Amb, which according to General Abbot and, on the whole, all the scholars of the period, might have been Aornos (Stein 1905: 19-31, *non vidi*, cited in Stein 1930: 2, n. 6; 1927: 420). Needless to say Stein was not convinced that Mahaban was Aornos. He supported the Pir-Sar theory on philological grounds. The name of the mountain's highest peak *Ūṇ(r)a-sar*, to which the Pashto appellation of Pir-sar ('peak of the saint') was added later, would be the Pashto form of an hypothesised Iranian form: *avarna* (or *hu-varna*, 'high fortified place', Sanskrit *āvarana*), from which the Greek form Aornos derives (Stein 1930: 89-90). However, in this context it should be noted that there are at least two other peaks on this mountain range which separates Swat from Puraṇ, with a similar name: the *Unrān-sar* (m 2,829 a.s.l.; 34° 43' N., 72° 30' E.) and the *Hūnrān-sar* (m 2,140 a.s.l.; 34° 45' N., 72° 36' E.).

In my view it is not necessary to accept the height attributed to Mount Aornos by the classical authors as conclusive proof in favour of one or other of the theories put forward as to the rock's exact whereabouts. Obviously, since this information is indirect it is all the more unreliable as it is subjective (and the same may be said for the example regarding the data on the size of Massaga in Curtius Rufus).

On this point Tucci thought differently, indicating Mount Ilam as the possible site of Aornos (Tucci 1977: 52-55), an imposing granitic peak which dominates the site of Bir-kot-ghwandai, within easy reach of this locality as well as from Udegram, and the most outstanding one of the mountain range which separates Swat from Buner (Fig. 8). Now, it is clear from the sources that the Pir-Sar has only one feature in common with Aornos: that is, that in actual fact the Indus flows past its foot. But, for the rest it is situated in a zone so far removed from the theatre of operations (the middle stretch of the Swat Valley), that it would be difficult to understand the whole episode. If the Aornos were in fact the Pir-Sar, it would refer to a mountain situated to the north-west of the Puran, very far away from Swat (and consequently from Bazira located at Bir-kot-ghwandai). It would therefore be difficult to explain why (according to Arrian's account) the inhabitants of Bazira should have chosen such a remote refuge which could only be reached after several days march over rough terrain (see Stein 1927: 433; also see Tucci 1977: 53). In any case it would be difficult to understand why Alexander (keeping to Arrian's account), having crossed Swat to gain Aornos (identified as Pir-Sar) which is situated in the north, diametrically opposite to Peukelaotis (modern Charsada, situated in the south, in the plain of the River Kabul), should have gone as far south as Peukelaotis only to retrace his steps northwards in order to take Aornos by storm... then to turn a little south again in order to cross the Indus. The question of Aornos apart, this passage demonstrates that Arrian's conception of the geography of the region was rather confused even though he had fuller information ⁽²⁸⁾.

By contrast, the identification of Aornos with Mount Ilam is plausible and logical. It is plausible and in harmony with the geographical context described by the two authors, and possibly even with the 'misleading' expression used by Curtius Rufus. Might it not in fact be possible to understand the phrase 'Radices [...] Indus amnis subit' as a rhetorical figure of speech instead of taking it literally (cf. McCrindle 1896: 197, n. 1)? It is a fact that once the Karakar Pass, dominated by Mount Ilam, has been crossed, one enters Buner and from there one can reach the Indus Valley without encountering further natural obstacles, and so metaphorically the Indus could be said to 'flow' past the foot of Mount Ilam/Aornos. This leaves the somewhat forced solution suggested by Tucci who interpreted this passage as the result of an extremely condensed piece of information (see Tucci 1977: 55). Nevertheless, despite the difficulty in solving this passage by Curtius Rufus, I still feel that the identification of Aornos with Mount Ilam has a sound basis.

The area we are studying became, at least since the 1st millennium B.C., very closely linked to the Iranian cultural context, of which it constituted the eastern

⁽²⁸⁾ Compare this with Eggermont's opinion: '[Arrianus] had not the slightest conception of the geography of Gandhara and he interpreted the ancient treatises quite freely' (1970: 108-9); also, with reference to another stage of Alexander's expedition (the 'Bactrian year') see Bosworth's opinion on the reliability of Arrian (Bosworth 1981).

limit, and to which it was politically integrated at least from the end of the 6th century B.C. as part of the Achaemenid Empire. Whether or not an Achaemenid horizon influenced the material culture of Swat has been hotly debated in the recent past ⁽²⁹⁾. However, despite the historical evidence, in the light of the data provided by archaeology, it should be said that apart from some isolated and problematical sites such as Balambat (Dir) or of Aligrama ⁽³⁰⁾, which are puzzling, the material cultural context seems to have been little affected by its integration into the Achaemenid Empire. It is probable that in reality this area retained a degree of autonomy since it belonged to the peripheral sector of the Empire. From the political-administrative point of view, it is certain that this area, which probably formed part of the satrapy of Gadara (Gandhara), was included in the Empire between the reigns of Darius I and of Xerxes II, that is between the end of the 6th and the middle of the 4th centuries B.C., as Achaemenid and Greek sources show (Kent 1953: Db 1, DPe, DNa, DSm, XPh; Herodotus, *Hist.*, III 91, 4; VII 66, 1). It is feasible to maintain that by the time Alexander arrived in India that the Achaemenid domination had ended as much as, or more than, half a century earlier (Silvi Antonini 1963: 13-26; Tucci 1963a: 27-28; Tucci 1977: 11). In fact, Alexander found some kingdoms or well-organised autonomous federations, and chiefdoms (*ibid.*: 38); indeed Alexander's biographers make no mention whatsoever of any sort of relationship between the local political bodies and the Achaemenid Empire Alexander had just conquered. It is therefore likely that this region, at least towards the end of the Achaemenid hegemony, was only nominally part of the Empire, and was perhaps organised in a system of 'client States' which removed the necessity of effective territorial control (here one may recall for example that at the battle of Gaugamela Indian contingents fought with the Persians).

⁽²⁹⁾ In particular see Dani 1966-67; Tucci 1970; Dittmann 1984; Stacul 1987b, 1989b; Vogelsang 1988.

⁽³⁰⁾ On the excavation of Balambat see Dani 1967. Some *pyraea* were found in some premises which the Pakistani archaeologists interpreted as 'fire altars' (Dani 1967: 41, pl. XLIIIa). Tucci considered such a hypothesis as dubious (Tucci 1970: 12). However, since then the more recent excavation at Aligrama has brought to light an important temple building 'probably to be connected with fire-worship [...]'. On this it has been written that it shows 'affinity with Iranian culture, which has also been found by archaeologists from Peshawar digging in the adjacent Dir Valley, is borne out by other features of the material culture, especially the pottery' (IsMEO Activities 1981: 176). Three 'fire-places' (possibly altars) have been found inside the building, two symmetrical ones to the south, near the entrance and one almost at the centre of the building. This belongs to Period IV of Aligrama corresponding to Periods VI-VII of the pre-protolithic sequence in Swat, 'the final period of the protolithic settlement immediately before its destruction (early 5th century B.C.)' (IsMEO Activities 1980: 203). In any case the date relative to Period IV at Balambat may be of great significance for this note, as it tallies with the 5th-4th centuries B.C. Note the wealth of iron objects; according to Dani, the site came to 'an abrupt end with no survival at all' (1967: 239) and perhaps this could tie in with the historical episode under examination. However, at this stage this is simply a conjecture. Of further interest is the discovery of a necropolis of the same date at Inayat-qala, in the Jandul Valley (Dani 1967: 233-34), clearly testifying to the particular importance this valley must have had due to the various roads that passed through it, as it was a major trunk road between Afghanistan and Dir.

However, although the cultural horizon of this region in this period (6th-4th centuries B.C.) appears to have been only marginally influenced by its inclusion in the Iranian political context, it would seem that Iranian culture looked towards and considered this territory in a different perspective. Some extremely interesting information relative to our subject is contained in the Avestic geography. In particular, the first chapter of the *Videvdāt* mentions that Ahura Mazda created sixteen districts which constituted the *locus particularis* of the Iranian experience. According to G. Gnoli's reconstruction, this geographical scheme, corresponding to an area between Sogdiana to the northeast, Gorgan to the west, the Punjab to the east and Drangiana to the south (i.e. between Eastern Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan), would seem to reflect a rather archaic ethnographic situation which is certainly pre-Achaemenidian (Gnoli 1980). The interest in this first chapter of the *Videvdāt* lies precisely in the name attributed to the XIV district: Varaena. Today, the identification of this with Gilan has been rejected, and S. Lévi's 'vecchia e solida tesi' has been reinstated (Gnoli 1967: 75), i.e., the identification of Varaena with the Varnu mentioned in the *Mahāmāyūrī*, and so with the modern Buner, and therefore with the Aornos of the historians of Alexander (Lévi 1915: 71 ff.; Henning 1947: 52-53, *non vidi*, cited in Gnoli 1967: 76; 1980: 48-50). It refers to the same regional toponym that Pāṇini calls Varana (Agrawala 1953: 69-70) and which might even correspond to the Cartana *tetragonis* in Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, VI 92: on this and Varaena 'of the four corners' see Gnoli 1980: 49-50). An extremely interesting point, in support of the thesis that recognises in Varana the modern Buner, is that in the text of the *Mahāmāyūrī* the corresponding toponym is placed next to that of Suvastu (Swat), Sindhu (region of the Indus), Gandhara, in a clearly geographical sequence (Lévi 1915: 71).

A singularly curious link is provided by the association, mentioned in other Avestic passages, between Varaena and the daemon Varan in Pahlavi texts, or even with a specific group of *daeua* ⁽³¹⁾. Furthermore, the same chapter mentions the fact that Varaena 'of the four corners' was the birth place of Thrāetaona, the killer of Aži Dahāka. This fact, according to the rhythmic theme of the text, represents the solar motion linked to this territory to which an Ahrimanic counter action (*patyara*) corresponds, expressed by the 'irregular signs' of the presence of 'non-Aryan masters of the land' (*Videvdāt*, I 17). According to Gnoli the Avestic text leads one to suppose Varaena to be where the myths originated about Thrāetaona's struggle with certain groups of *daeua*, perhaps even with the monstrous tricephalus serpent, Aži Dahāka, itself, referred to in this chapter of the *Videvdāt* (Gnoli 1967: 76). To return to the subject of the Aornos of Alexander's chroniclers, mention should be made of a tradition reported by Megasthenes (frag. B3, 4, cit. in Dahlquist 1962: 120 ff.) to which Curtius Rufus, Arrian and others refer (VIII 11, 2; *Anabasis* IV 28, 1-4; *Indica*, V 7; Diodorus *Hist.*, XVII 85, 1; Justin, *Epit.*, XII 7, 12-13). This was the scene of an unsuccessful

⁽³¹⁾ This deals with the *varenya drvantō* mentioned in the *Yast* XXVII, V 22; XIII 127 (on this see Gnoli 1967: 76).

labour of Hercules which Alexander wished to repeat successfully by triumphantly taking the stronghold. So, in Greek tradition the place also appears to be connected with a heroic primeval figure. The possible relation between the figure of the Greek demigod and Thrāetaona (similarly armed with a club, see Bianchi 1958: 27) is posed, although it does not form the subject of the present paper. Attention is only drawn here to the fact that according to some, the name Aornos could be identified with Aurnavabha meaning Vṛtra (= Aži Dahāka) against whom Indra (= Thrāetaona) fought (Dahlquist 1962: 120 ff.; see Tucci 1963b; 1977: 55; for the relation between Indra-Vṛtra and Thrāetaona-Aži Dahāka see Dahlquist 1962: 122 ff.; also Bianchi 1958: 17). In addition, in connection with this episode it should be mentioned that Curtius Rufus in narrating the battle between Alexander and Porus describes a standard borne by the Indian infantry, which he calls a *Herculis simulacrum* (VIII 14, 11). Evidently, this refers to the image of an Indian god of war, which the Macedonians identified with Hercules on account of an attribute which suggested such an association (possibly the club? Cf. Indra's *vajra*, see Megasthenes, frag. B1, 3, 4 and on this Dahlquist 1962: 152 ff.; also see Gail 1991: 428-29). Lastly, as Tucci pointed out, the labour of Hercules on Aornos might echo a tradition about the unsuccessful attempt of a god or daemon to conquer the sacred *locus* (Tucci 1977: 55, and also 1963b: 171, 176-77).

In view of the above-mentioned relationship between the names of Varaena, Varnu, Varana and the modern Buner, the toponym of Aornos used by Alexander's chroniclers can be equated with the mountain of Buner. Today, only one place answers to this description which retains traces not only of an ancient mythological tradition but is contemporaneously close enough to Bazira or to the fortified centres near Ora (referred to in the texts both of Curtius Rufus and Arrian), that metaphorically speaking dominates the course of the Indus and holds, for whoever approaches it from Swat, the key of access (the Karakar Pass). This site, as Tucci pointed out, cannot but be Mount Ilam. So it is Ilam, the mountain of Buner *par excellence* (also a spectacular sight) that dominates the Indus, figuratively speaking, and not the Pir-Sar which does physically overlook it, but in too northerly a stretch of its course, in a position irrelevant to, and far removed from, the scene of Alexander's operations. The feat Hercules failed to achieve was attempted anew by Alexander who succeeded in gaining the summit by employing scalers⁽³²⁾ and by filling in the chasm surrounding the natural stronghold with debris. On the difficulty of climbing Ilam by a direct route, an exploit undertaken in person by the writer (see Stein 1929: 168 ff.). Moreover, Mount Ilam still retains a sacred character that is unique in the whole region, as Tucci's words testify: '[...] Ilam has remained a holy place to the present day. Nowadays on the highest spot there is written on a rock the name of Sri Ram (Rama, incarnation of

⁽³²⁾ This concerns the Agrianes, a national contingent of Alexander's army recruited from the tribe of the same name in Paeonia (today south-central Bulgaria). The Agrianes were usually employed in all the more difficult and complicated military operations (Faure 1982).

Visnu). Hindus, Sikhs and even Muslims go there [...]. The sacrality of the Ilam goes back to the prehistoric times, and has survived the changes of religions [...]. With reference to this, it should be noted that even today, the summit of the mountain is called in Pashto *Jōgianō-sar* ('Yogin's peak'; see Stein 1930: 102). Therefore, with the great Italian scholar one can conclude that the Mount Meru of this whole region is Mount Ilam, Hi-la (Xiluo) in the Chinese sources, Hilo the in Tibetan, and Aornos in the histories of Alexander (Tucci 1944: 348, n. 4; 1977: 27) ⁽³³⁾.

Curtius Rufus recounts that once Aornos/Ilam had been captured, the regency of this and of the surrounding regions was entrusted to Sisicottus (Sandrakottus), an Indian ally (VII 11; XI 25), before the Macedonian proceeded to Ecbolima. Arrian, at this stage in the campaign, narrates Alexander's arrival at Peukleaotis; and his departure from thence to lay siege to Aornos using nearby Embolima as his base (IV 29), or the place Curtius Rufus calls Ecbolima. Alexander, having conquered the stronghold, installed a garrison there under the command of Sisicottus, an Indian formerly in the service of Bessus in Bactria (IV 30). The identification of the site of Embolima or Ecbolima also appears to favour Curtius Rufus' version ⁽³⁴⁾. It is clear that the route traced by Curtius Rufus is by far the most logical and plausible in

⁽³³⁾ Ilam, the name the mountain is known by today, is not of Pashto origin and it evidently derives from the forms mentioned in the Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist sources. The Chinese form (from which the Tibetan one derives), quoted by Xuanzang in his *Xiyou Ji (Records of the Western World I, iii)*, is Xiluo (Beal 1884: 123; cf. Foucher 1902: 48, n. 3): two ideograms which, according to B. Karlgren's repertory, were pronounced Hi-la in the Tang period. (I owe Prof. L. Lanciotti my sincere thanks for his help on this point). Perhaps it is not too farfetched to argue that 'Hi-la' may be the phonetic transcription in Chinese of Varana (Varnu, etc.; which would mean that the labial sound at the beginning of the word was dropped, since it does not exist in Chinese phonetics — as happened for identical reasons for the Greek form of Aornos — and, analogously, the phonetic mutation of the syllable 'ra' in 'la').

In the expectation of the experts' opinion regarding the validity of this hypothesis, one can only observe that forms such as: Hi-la, Hilo, Ilam, gained favour and actually supplanted the Indian ones, remaining in use up to the present day in Pashto toponymy. Doubtless this can be partly attributed to the particular role Swat (also Padmasambhava's native land) had in trans-Himalayan Buddhism: in fact the accounts of Buddhist pilgrims have the merit of being the first to describe the Swat landscape according to the canons of a *sacred topography*. In practice, the frequent passage of Buddhist pilgrims in Swat (up to the 13th-14th centuries A.D.) must, in some cases, have introduced toponymic mutations that gradually became customary and were eventually adopted by the new Pathan occupiers.

⁽³⁴⁾ Obviously, if Aornos is Ilam, Arrian's passage relative to the base Alexander established preparatory to assaulting it namely Embolima must be read with the greatest attention (IV 28, 6-8). At one time this locality was identified with the site of Amb (Lévy 1915: 73; Stein 1930: 7), then with that of Ambela (Eggermont 1970: 92-94; 1984: 76-79). Eggermont actually defines it as the '*only fixed geographical point*' in the itinerary of the Macedonian in this region (1984: 76). Both the hypotheses situate that locality in the south-east of Buner, in a place that Alexander, if Aornos is Ilam, could not yet have reached. In my opinion it could be another error on Arrian's part since the sites proposed by the scholars, whichever may be the right one, would be more likely to coincide with the reconstruction given by Curtius Rufus who places Ecbolima *after* the conquest of Aornos (VIII 12, 1). This locality

light of his knowledge of the local topography and the strategy chosen. Arrian, on the other hand, appears to be better informed, knows many more details, but is inconsistent as far as his general knowledge of the area is concerned.

Lastly, something should be said about the problem of the garrison at Aornos. If, as we maintain, Aornos is Ilam, the presence of this garrison should not be sought (supposing that despite its short duration it left some archaeologically recognisable signs) on the summit of Ilam. Although the top of the mountain presents a great advantage for a defensive redoubt, it is not suitable for a permanent year-round camp, also because of the high altitude. An equally effective and more practical control is offered by the Karakar Pass. Many archaeological surveys have been carried out on the hilltop, from that by Stein (1930: 99-104) to the most recent ones (in 1992, 1993 and 1995 by the present writer). Of particular interest was the one Stacul carried out in 1972 which brought to light some pottery sherds dating to the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. (*IsMEO Activities* 1972: 384).

Conclusion

At this point one should pause to draw some conclusions from what has been outlined so far, in order to provide a resumé that can serve as a pro-memoria for anyone wishing to study a subject such as this in greater depth in order to clarify some of the obscure points that still remain. Thus, it is hoped that future archaeological research in Swat will throw more light on some questions, such as the reinforcement of the defences at Bazira after the Macedonian victory. It is anticipated that a more accurate survey can definitively disprove the hypothesis that locates Massaga in the vicinity of the Katgala Pass. So far as the research that has already been completed goes, a definitive evaluation of the importance of the Aligrama site in relation to this question will become available on the publication of the Final Report on the excavation, shortly to be published. Furthermore, the results of the excavation at Aligrama together with the results of the excavation at Barikot, and, to a lesser degree, at Udegram, are expected to throw some new light on the so-called 'Achaemenid' horizon and on the centuries immediately succeeding it, the period in which the Macedonian conquest took place, followed by the region's inclusion in the Mauryan Empire. The said period, which corresponds to the end of the so-called 'protohistoric' period, is still the most elusive one in the chronological sequence in Swat.

In an attempt to offer a conclusive reconstruction of Alexander's route through this area, one can honestly say that, on integrating the sources available with the

is also mentioned by Ptolemy (*Geo.*, VII 1, 57; see Eggermont 1970: 77), according to whom it is to be found on the Indus: if one were to take these directions literally, one would have to give Amb preference over Ambela. However, it has been shown how misleading some of the over-precise directions given by the classical authors can be.

topographical knowledge of the region, Curtius Rufus' version proves to be more reliable than Arrian's. The Choaspes River mentioned by Curtius Rufus certainly corresponds to the Indian Suvastu and to the Soastos of Ptolemy and therefore to the River Swat (leaving aside Arrian's dubious reference to the Euaspla, which is probably a spurious reconstruction to fill a gap in the text, as mentioned earlier). After having reached the Kunar Valley (Choes) and gone down the Jandul Valley (see n. 31), Alexander may have reached the Panjkora (Gouraios) and from there by going through the Talash Valley, he would have reached the Swat. Once he had crossed the River Swat at a point somewhere between Chakdarra and Barikot, Alexander went along the left bank until he reached Bazira, or Barikot (Bir-kot-ghwandai). The strategic importance of this site has already been described; it should be remembered that it is only after gaining possession of Barikot that it is possible to proceed to the Karakar Pass, guarded by Ilam (Aornos), and thence to the Buner and the Indus Valley. Therefore, Alexander would have first taken Massaga, the capital, for obvious strategic motives, and planned to attack Udegram (Ora) second. In fact, hardly had Alexander gained control of Massaga than he sent part of the troops to remove a threat, that, in the strategy of the occupation of Swat, represented a very real thorn in his side. An especially deadly thorn if one credits the detail Arrian adds: that reinforcements were sent to Ora by a sovereign of a more easterly kingdom, Abisares. For this reason the troops were recalled from Bazira and Alexander himself sent others to Ora. On the basis of this reconstruction the ancient capital of the Assaceniens must have been situated higher upstream than Barikot and Udegram, perhaps near the modern Aligrama (to lay siege to which it would have been necessary to cross the Swat River a second time, a fact, however, of which there is no record in the sources), or in any case somewhere in that fertile and important area where the Saidu, Jambil and Swat Rivers meet. In this zone some important settlements have been identified which were flourishing in this period: besides Aligrama, other agricultural hill settlements such as Loebanr II (IsMEO Activities 1979: 295) and Kalako-deray (Stacul 1990; 1993; 1993b; 1993c; 1995) come to mind, and the protohistoric phases of Barama (Period 6; Faccenna 1964-65); in addition to the necropolises of Katelai I, Loebanr I and Butkara II (Silvi Antonini & Stacul 1979) as well as that of Aligrama (Tusa 1981).

At the centre of this plain, Xuanzang who visited the region in a much later period (5-7th century A.D.), situate Mèngjieli (³⁵). This is where the most important town in the modern Swat District, Mingora, stands today. Note that from here it is possible to control all the major passes that give access to Buner (with the exception of the Karakar Pass in the south), besides the important path that leads to the top of Ilam.

The capture of Massaga broke the resistance of all the *oppida* in the region and its inhabitants sought refuge on the nearby Mount Ilam (on this episode also see Tucci 1977: 52). For Alexander, who at this stage in the campaign was in control

(³⁵) On this see Stein 1921: 15; the definitive identification with Mingora is in Tucci 1958: 285-88.

of Swat, the next most pressing objective on his march towards the Indus was that of taking Ilam and the Karakar pass after that. If Ilam is indeed Aornos, then one can definitively discard Arrian's version about Alexander's descent on Peukelaotis prior to attacking the mountain. Exactly by which route would Alexander have approached the plain? Certainly not the one through the Karakar Pass, guarded by Ilam, which had yet to be taken, but by one of the southern passes of the valley (Cherat, Shahkot, etc.). All this movement of troops in Swat, the Peukelaotis Plain and Buner, as though they were drilling on a parade ground, is highly unlikely given the type of terrain.

However, by accepting the alternative hypothesis that sees Aornos in Mount Ilam, and crediting Curtius Rufus' account, it is plausible that Alexander, after having captured the stronghold, would have gone through the Karakar Pass on his way to the Indus via Buner and passed the site known to Alexander's historians as Embolima or Ecbolima (see n. 22) before joining the bulk of the army near the Indus.

* * *

The historical episode under examination shows of what great strategic importance Swat was to Alexander. As the main body of troops marched through the Kabul Valley towards India 'true and proper' it becomes evident that the purpose of the expedition in Swat was to establish a strong salient in the north to serve, at least for a time, as a dynamic advanced system of defence⁽³⁶⁾ to defend a vital territory that was not Swat but the Peukelaotis Plain watered by the River Kabul. Later, as we have seen, the organisation of Swat was based with little success, on a dual system of control which provided for: a) the creation of a clientage relationship with the tribal powers and b) the stationing of garrisons in key places as a visible military deterrent. This region's geo-political characteristics may well have been turned to advantage in the Achaemenidian period when an ostensible satellite control of Swat would at least have guaranteed the safety of the plain. Probably during the Indo-Greek and Scyto-Parthian periods (2nd century B.C.-1st A.D.), Swat was more or less organised on the model of Alexander's Indian Satrapies (with garrisons *in loco*, etc.; on how the region was organised in Mauryan times unfortunately nothing is known), within a much more comprehensive defence system designed to control the whole of the territory (communication routes, mountain passes, forts), as would seem to be indicated by the foundations of a powerful fortified city, such as the one discovered at Bir-kot-ghwandai, or the remains of the installations at Udegram and Damkot, the fortified site of Barama besides the 'inhabited area' of Butkara I⁽³⁷⁾. This series of foundations proves that in that period the 'upper road' (connecting Bajaur-Swat-Buner)

⁽³⁶⁾ For an excellent analysis of the concept of the system of advanced defence, see Luttwak 1976.

⁽³⁷⁾ On Damkot see Abdur Rahman 1968-69; on Barama, see Faccenna 1964-65; on Butkara I, see Faccenna 1962, 1981; also see Coppa 1981: 758-59).

was in constant use and possibly competed with the 'Grand' Route ancienne'. The opening of the shorter 'route du Khaïber' (Khyber road) and the growing importance of Purushapura (Peshawar) must have tended to reduce the importance of Swat. It is interesting to note that these events (1st/2nd-3rd centuries A.D.) were part of that situation which developed into what a happy turn of phrase has called the *pax kushanica* (Tucci 1977: 49-50), in which Swat, perhaps for the first time in history, ceased to be a peripheral region to become the 'metropolitan' territory of an empire. This might explain what appear to be signs of 'demilitarisation' at Bir-kot-ghwandai, as shown by the excavations: the walls of the Indo-Greek period were re-employed to underpin civil constructions and even fell into disrepair and were partly buried by the time Swat entered the Sasanian *Kushanshāhr* (3rd-5th centuries A.D.) (Callieri et al. 1992: 19-25).

A similar situation with textual testimony to support the archaeological evidence does not occur until the Hindushahi period (8th-11th centuries A.D.) when, according to the Kashmiri sources, the *shāhi* of Swat were a sort of powerful *clientes* of the Kings of Kashmir (Chunder Dutt 1898, vol. I: 122; Stein, 1900). Despite the difficulty of judging how objective this information is, it is sufficiently probable: all in all Swat must have been considered an effective bulwark by the peoples beyond the Indus against any danger coming from the west, and this meant they needed to control the 'upper road'. This is the context in which it would seem possible to situate the much earlier episode of Abisares, the sovereign of a territory beyond the Indus who sent reinforcements to the relief of Ora, besieged by the Macedonians. A parallel may be drawn with the time one of the Kashmiri sovereigns sent troops to the help of the *shāhi* of Swat when they were attacked by the Turco-Muslims (*ibid.*, vol. II: xxvi-xxvii). The strategic importance of this bulwark was obviously much greater for the kingdoms to the east of it, for whom it represented a very real advanced boundary line: consider how relatively easy it was for Alexander to enter the territory to the east of Swat once he had subdued the Assacanian Kingdom and arrogated its power.

The Hindushahi organisation of Swat was apparently based on a rigid and capillary control of the territory by means of a series of forts (Olivieri 1996): as follows, starting from the west, Gumbatuna, Katgala (in the Talash Valley; Dani 1968-69; Rahman 1979), Kota (Olivieri 1996), Kalungai (Barger & Wright 1941), Damkot (Rahman 1968-69; 1979), Thana (*ibid.*), Barikot (Stein 1930; Tucci 1958; Olivieri 1996 and in press), Bar Tangai (Olivieri 1994), Udegram (Stein 1930; Gullini 1958; 1962; Tucci 1958), Sure Tangai (Stein 1930; Tucci 1958). These were linked by watchtowers within signalling distance. The whole control system, placed on high ground and peaks, was designed to keep the highway under close observation, at least (as far as we know) from the Swat-Panjhora gorge to the Buner River. Swat's relationship with the Kabul Plain suffered a reverse in this phase of its history. At first Swat had to be, within the Hindushahi possessions, the salient of an advanced system of defence to protect the 'route du Khaïber' and then of the centres of Purushapura and Ohind. Following the Turco-Muslim conquest of the Hindushahi

territory of Afghanistan and then of the Kabul Plain (Rahman 1979: 130-67), Swat, once again became the salient of a defence system that went from the Kunar Valley to Kashmir, but it then, acted as an outpost from which it was possible to control the entire Kabul Plain, by now lost to the Turco-Muslims. In fact it was at this time that the region had to function as a bastion for the territory to the east of the Indus mentioned above. This, among other things, is borne out by a series of military bases built on the Malakand Range to control the Kabul Plain (Dani 1968-69: 30) and, by the fact that the eastern frontier of Swat continued to be undefended (apart from the check points to control the road network in Buner, see Stein 1898).

The Hindushahi era over, our knowledge of the region's geo-political administration is scant, due to the absence of lasting State structures. After the Ghaznavid conquest, around the 13th century A.D., Swat appears to have entered the orbit of the more easterly kingdoms. We know from the account of the Tibetan pilgrim, O rgyan, that a Prefect of Uddiyana (the name of the region which included Swat in this period) apparently resided in the city of Ka bo ko or Ka'oka, situated in Buner, east of Swat, a two or three-day march from the Karakar Pass (Tucci 1940: 391). Swat proper, now a land of brigands and wizards, was very unsafe due to the absence of any real political control. Nevertheless, it is still possible to ascertain that the Karakar Pass was in use, since it is referred to in the itineraries of Tibetan pilgrims as K'a rag k'ar or K'araksar (*ibid.*: 386 ff.). Several centuries later, on the 11th February 1519, the pass, mentioned in the sources as Qara-kupa, was used by Babur's army. The latter, as is known, coming from Bajaur (via the Jandul Valley) descended towards Ambela (Ambahar) before reaching the Charsada Plain (Hasht-nagar) where it engaged the rebels (Beveridge 1922: 376-77). The site of Bir-kot-ghwandai virtually maintained its strategic character awaiting the arrival of a political organ capable of exalting it and using its specific qualities to advantage.

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