

My journey was to take me not only to distant regions but also far back in the ages. So it was doubly appropriate that its first march should lead over ground full of ancient associations. I knew that in the open fertile valley of Uch, through which I was riding northward, the much-injured ruins of Buddhist Stupas and monasteries were dotting the low spurs, just as at so many points of ancient Udyana along the Swat River. But there was no time now to revisit them.

Soon as the road turned to the west towards the Katgala Pass which divides the Swat and Panjkora drainage, my eyes were delighted to catch sight again of the picturesque ruins of ancient towers and dwellings rising above the scrub-covered slopes on the left. In the burning afternoon sun they looked, indeed, what their local Pashtu name, 'Saremanai,' derived from the colour of the sandstone material, calls them, 'the red houses.' That a thousand years at least has passed over these remains of Buddhist Udyana is certain. But more fascinating vistas rose before me as, hurrying on through the oscillating glare of the first hot-weather day, I thought of the tempting suggestion, discussed only the night before with General Barrow, that Alexander on his way from the Kunar Valley to Gandhara and to Aornos must have marched by this route. Broad geographical facts lend support to this association. Yet, alas, just as in the search for Aornos, the extant accounts of the Macedonian's Indian campaign fail to furnish conclusive topographical evidence for this part of his route.

A glorious view from the Katgala Pass over the broad Talash Valley and across the deep-cut course of the Panjkora made up for critical misgivings of this nature. Far away to the west the snow-covered ranges above Bajaur and Pashat closed the horizon. Between them and the green fields of Talash stretched a picturesque jumble of well-wooded low hills, ideal ground, it seemed, for those adventurous raiding parties which Bajaur used to send forth, and which are still a tangible danger for this part of the Dir-Chitral route. The numerous posts held here by Dir Levies along the road showed that the risk of such