

India, after mentioning other things, he said that he thought he had discovered the sources of the Nile, forming his conclusions about things so great from such small and trivial premisses. However, when he had made a more careful inquiry into the facts relating to the river Indus, he learned the following details from the natives: — That the Hydaspes unites its waters with the Acesines, as the latter does with the Indus, and that they both yield up their names to the Indus; that the last-named river has two mouths, through which it discharges itself into the Great Sea; but that it has no connection with the Egyptian country. He then removed from the letter to his mother the part he had written about the Nile. Planning a voyage down the rivers as far as the Great Sea, he ordered ships for this purpose to be prepared for him.»

Now, as he first thought he had discovered the source of the Nile, but later on was informed that he had to do only with the Indus, he must have started upon his journey down this river with the conviction that he had in reality discovered its source. For, that he was convinced that he was quite near the source appears clearly both from Arrian and Strabo, the latter saying of Aornus, »cujus radices Indus non procul a fonte suo alluit». And therefore the curious case occurs, that he claims to have discovered the source of a river, which in reality was discovered only 2,233 years later! For us, when trying to make out what the ancient geographers really meant by »the source of the Indus», it would have been valuable to be enabled to locate Aornus. As it is we must suppose that they imagined the whole mighty river rushing out from the very narrow gorge itself, above and beyond which nothing but high inaccessible mountains were seen. This was the view of the whole antiquity, and of European cartographers 250 years ago and less. And it could not possibly be otherwise, for the country in and beyond Himalaya, was absolutely unknown.¹

Regarding the situation of Aornus in relation to the source of the Indus, VIEN DE SAINT-MARTIN is no doubt right in expressing the following view:

On a vu que dans Strabon Aornos est situé à la source de l'Indus; il est clair que, dans les anciennes informations recueillies par les Grecs, ces gorges étroites où l'Indus s'engage après avoir traversé la contrée montagneuse de Balti, et d'où il débouche avec un bruit formidable auprès de Derbend, et de Torbila, avaient été représentées comme l'origine même du fleuve. C'est ainsi qu'Arrien a pu dire »l'Indus est déjà un grand fleuve quand il sort impétueusement de ses sources. . . . Tous les auteurs de l'antiquité grecque et latine, sans préciser la localité comme le fait Strabon dans ce passage, font, en effet, naître l'Indus directement au nord, au pied du Paropanisus ou Caucase Indien . . .²

¹ FORBIGER: Handbuch II, p. 63.

² Étude sur la Géographie Grecque et Latine de l'Inde, et en particulier sur l'Inde de PTOLÉMÉE,, dans ses rapports avec la Géographie Sanscrite. — Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres de l'Institut Impérial de France. I Série, Tome V, 2. Paris 1858, p. 43.