

Here Masudi gives us the interesting news that in his days, as during classical antiquity and Alexander's time, geographers were searching for the sources of the most famous rivers, amongst them the Indus and the Ganges. In a somewhat new form we again meet the extraordinary theory of the connection between the Nile and the Indus. But while Alexander, according to Arrian, supposed the Indus were the source of the Nile, EL-DJAHEZ suggests that the Nile is the source of the Indus.<sup>1</sup> In both cases the crocodiles are responsible for this most curious mistake. Masudi knows the absurdity of the theory, but is himself very vague in placing the source of the Indus, in spite of his asserting the situation of the sources to be well known. He locates them over a very considerable area, from Kandahar in the west, which refers to the Kabul river, indeed a tributary of the Indus, to the territory of Kanauj in the east, which is absurd, as Kanauj falls within the drainage area of the Ganges. If he had satisfied himself with the assertion that the sources were situated in the high region of Sind, he would have been nearer the truth. Masudi does not point out one principal source but thinks of the source of every separate tributary in the Panjab; in Kashmir for instance he has one source, referring to the Jehlum, and in this case he is right.

But what does he mean by the »great freshwater sea that should not be confounded with the ocean»? As he specially points out this distinction he can only mean a lake in the interior of the continent. The Caspian and Lake Aral are *a priori* excluded, for Masudi knew them and they contain salt water. During his journeys in India he may easily have heard that the Indus and the Ganges and two other rivers came from a great fresh-water lake in the north, and with the usual exaggeration of his time he has changed the information to embrace *all* rivers. It is difficult to see what else his fresh-water sea could be than our old Manasarovar. Unfortunately he does not mention the name, and therefore, as in so many other cases, we are confined to conjecture.<sup>2</sup>

Further on he again touches the question of the source of the Oxus and its connection with the Indus:

La ville de Balkh possède un poste (ribat) nommé el-Akhcheban, et situé à vingt jours de marche environ. En face vivent deux tribus de Turcs infidèles, les Oukhan et les Tibétains et à leur droite d'autres Turcs nommés Igan. C'est dans le territoire de ceux-ci qu'est la source d'un grand fleuve nommé aussi fleuve d'Igan. Plusieurs personnes instruites prennent ce fleuve pour le commencement du Djeihoun, ou fleuve de Balkh. Le Djeihoun a un parcours de cent cinquante parasanges, selon les uns, et de quatre cent parasanges selon ceux qui le confondent avec le fleuve des Turcs ou Igan. Quant aux auteurs qui avancent que le Djeihoun se jette dans le Mehran (Indus), ils sont dans l'erreur.

<sup>1</sup> In SPRENGER'S translation this passage runs thus: »El-Jáhit supposes that the river Mihrán in es-Sind is the Nile, alleging as a proof that crocodiles live in it.» Op. cit. Vol. I, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> In the following century ALBERUNI, quoting the Matsya- and Vaya-Purana, said of another lake: »In the mountain Kailâsa there is the pond Manda, *as large as a sea*, whence comes the river Mandakini.»