

Apparently, from 1221 A. D. onward for some centuries the Oxus bifurcated at certain times, one stream flowing to the Sea of Aral and one to the Caspian. Hamdulla, who has just been quoted, distinctly mentions such a bifurcation. He adds that the Sea of Aral had a compass of one hundred parasangs, from which it appears that the diversion of part of the Oxus had not materially diminished the lake. A century later, a Persian writer, Sultan Shah Rukh, in whom Rawlinson puts much confidence, tells us that "in all ancient books the lake of Kharesm [Aral] is described as the receptacle of the waters of the Oxus, but at the present date, which is A. H. 820 [A. D. 1417], the lake no longer exists, the Jhelum [Oxus] having made a way for itself to the Caspian, into which it disembogues at a place called Karlawn, or Ak-richeh." Elsewhere Shah Rukh repeats this assertion. He further says that "the river of Khojend [the Jaxartes] in the lower part of its course, after passing into the desert of Kharesm, joins the Jyhun or Oxus, and thus ultimately reaches the Caspian." Rawlinson takes this to mean that the Jaxartes followed the old channel already referred to, branching southwest below Otrar and joining the Oxus below Khiva, and that the united streams flowed to the Caspian through the Uz-boi, or old channel of the Oxus at the foot of the Ust-Urt plateau. If this is so, the Caspian ought to have stood at a comparatively high level, as apparently it did, to judge from the following quotation from Brückner: "Bakui informs us that early in the fifteenth century the sea swallowed up a part of the former city of Baku, and that in his time the water stood at the level of a still existing mosque. Apparently, we have here to do with an expansion of the sea