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## A MIRACULOUS FOUNTAIN IN INDIA

Klaus Karttunen

In the small anonymous collection of wonders known as *Paradoxographus Vaticanus Rohdii*<sup>1</sup> there is a fragment of Hellanicus concerning a miraculous fountain in India in which nothing can float (Ἑλλάνικος ἐν Ἰνδοῖς εἶναι φησι κρήνην Σίλλην καλουμένην, ἐφ' ἧς καὶ τὰ ἐλαφρότατα καταποντίζεται).<sup>2</sup> The same was told some time later by Ctesias, preserved for us by Pliny (*Ctesias tradit Siden vocari stagnum in Indis in quo nihil innatet, omnia mergantur*)<sup>3</sup> and Antigonus (Τὴν δ' ἐν τοῖς Ἰνδικοῖς κρήνην Σίλαν οὐδὲ τὸ κουφότατον τῶν βληθέντων ἔαν ἐπιμένειν, ἀλλὰ πάντα καθέλκειν).<sup>4</sup> In a passage very likely derived from Megasthenes, Strabo tells us that even Democritus and Aristotle have mentioned the same (Ἐν δὲ τῇ ὀρεινῇ Σίλαν ποταμὸν εἶναι ᾧ μηδὲν ἐπιπλεῖ· Δημόκριτον μὲν οὖν ἀπιστεῖν ἅτε πολλὴν τῆς Ἀσίας πεπλανημένον· καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ ἀπιστεῖ, καίπερ ἀέρων ὄντων λεπτῶν οἷς οὐδὲν ἐποχεῖται πτηνόν...)<sup>5</sup> It is very likely that Megasthenes is also Diodorus Siculus's source for the same (ἴδιον δέ τι συμβαίνει περὶ τινὰ τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἰνδικὴν ποταμῶν τὸν ὀνομαζόμενον Σίλλαν, ῥέοντα δ' ἔκ τινος ὁμωνύμου κρήνης· ἐπὶ γὰρ τούτου μόνου τῶν ἀπάντων ποταμῶν οὐδὲν τῶν ἐμβαλλομένων εἰς

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by Keller, *Naturalium rerum scriptores Graeci* I, 1877.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. 36 = Jacoby, FGrH 4 F 190.

<sup>3</sup> Nat. 31,21 = FGrH 688 F 47b, this was copied by Isidorus 13,13,7.

<sup>4</sup> *Mirabilia* 146 (161) = FGrH 688 F 47a.

<sup>5</sup> Strabo 15,1,38, p. 703 = FGrH 715 F 10b. The Megasthenes fragment probably ends with ἐπιπλεῖ (as in Jacoby), and the references to Democritus (Vorsokr. 68 A 12) and Aristotle are added by Strabo. After the quoted passage there is some discussion of the possibility of such phenomena, either by Strabo himself or Aristotle.

αὐτὸν ἐπιπλεῖ, πάντα δ' εἰς τὸν βυθὸν καταδύεται παραδόξως).<sup>6</sup> A certain fragment of Megasthenes and the basis for the ascription of the preceding two is preserved by Arrian (Ἐπεὶ καὶ τόδε λέγει Μεγασθένης ὑπὲρ ποταμοῦ Ἰνδικοῦ, Σίλαν μὲν εἶναί οἱ ὄνομα, ῥέειν δὲ ἀπὸ κρήνης ἐπωνύμου τῷ ποταμῷ διὰ τῆς χώρας τῆς Σιλέων, καὶ τούτων ἐπωνύμων τοῦ ποταμοῦ τε καὶ τῆς κρήνης· τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ παρέχεσθαι τοιόνδε· οὐδὲν εἶναι ὄτω ἀντέχει τὸ ὕδωρ οὔτε τι νήχεσθαι ἐπ' αὐτοῦ οὔτε τι ἐπιπλεῖν, ἀλλὰ πάντα γὰρ ἐς βυσσὸν δύνειν· οὔτω τι ἀμενηνότερον πάντων εἶναι τὸ ὕδωρ ἐκεῖνο καὶ ἡεροειδέστερον).<sup>7</sup> A people *Silae* is mentioned by Pliny<sup>8</sup> in a list of peoples dwelling on the Indus.

There seems to be some discrepancy between the different sources. The first concerns the name itself. Hellanicus, the earliest authority, seems to have written it with λλ, although this is not absolutely certain when there is only one manuscript. That Ctesias used only one λ seems rather certain, although both fragments have corruptions.<sup>9</sup> As for Megasthenes, both alternatives are found. Arrianus reads Σίλαν, giving probably the most reliable variant, which is also supported by the Epitome of Strabo. Strabo's actual manuscripts have the reading Σιλίαν, and Diodorus gives Σίλλαν (but *Anecdota Gr.* Σίλας). As for the people, we can still notice the conjectural Σιλαίων suggested by Reiske. It seems very likely that the difference between λ and λλ originated in the sources (Hellanicus, Ctesias and Megasthenes).

In Megasthenes' three fragments there are some lexical coincidences which seem to be due to Megasthenes himself. All three use the verb ἐπιπλεῖν, and the next sentence is similar enough in Diodorus and Arrianus. The agreement between these two authors shows that Megasthenes spoke of both a river and its source. Strabo mentions only the

<sup>6</sup> Diod. Sic. 2,37 = FGrH 715 F 4. Schwanbeck's fragment XXII for Megasthenes (Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca* I, p. 419) is derived from this, but reads Σίλας.

<sup>7</sup> Indica 6 = FGrH 715 F 10a.

<sup>8</sup> Nat. 6,77.

<sup>9</sup> Mayhoff was probably right in proposing that *Siden* is a corruption due to the similarity of delta and lambda in Greek (ΣΙΔΗΝ<ΣΙΛΗΝ): This correction is adopted in some editions (e.g. Serbat 1972). The only ms. containing the *Mirabilia* of Antigonus reads ἴλαν, but the Σ is easy to restore.

river, but even this is enough to connect him with the Megasthenian tradition. In Hellanicus' and Ctesias' fragments only the spring, not the river, is mentioned, and the words used to describe it are not the same as in Megasthenes.<sup>10</sup>

The miraculous fountain is interesting in several respects. It is part of the meagre amount of knowledge the Greeks had about India before the Indian expedition of Alexander the Great.<sup>11</sup> It is attested by several authors,<sup>12</sup> four of whom belong to this first period of Graeco-Indian contacts. It is one of those points where Megasthenes has clearly used older Greek sources.<sup>13</sup> And although there are some non-Indian parallels to it,<sup>14</sup> its Indian (or eastern) origin seems to be indisputable.

The fact that we have one fragment of Hellanicus on India is of course no reason for ascribing it to a book on India that has totally disappeared, as was done by Jacoby<sup>15</sup> on the grounds that some of his other ethnographical works are attested to in only one or two fragments. Also unnecessary is Kullmer's hypothesis that our fragment belongs to the supposed Indian expedition of Cyrus,<sup>16</sup> but Reese's argument<sup>17</sup> against it is not valid. Although Cyrus never went to India

<sup>10</sup> True, there is the difficult ἐπιμένειν in Antigonus, for which several scholars have suggested ἐπιπλεῖν (Keller in appar.). But this is a mere conjecture and even with ms. evidence (which is now lacking) it would only suggest Megasthenes' dependence upon Ctesias, which is anyway likely.

<sup>11</sup> Curiously this is missing in all preserved histories and fragments on Alexander.

<sup>12</sup> Καὶ ταῦτα δὲ πλείους εἰρήκασιν καὶ ἐπὶ πλείονων ὑδάτων remarks Antigonus after the Ctesias fragment quoted above.

<sup>13</sup> Megasthenes' dependance upon his predecessors has been admirably discussed by Otto Stein in his RE-article on Megasthenes (RE XV, 1932, 230–326).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Antigonus quoted above in note 12 and Herodotus 3,23 on a similar fountain in Ethiopia (discussed later).

<sup>15</sup> Jacoby, RE VIII, 1913, 130, followed by Reese, Die griechischen Nachrichten über Indien bis zum Feldzuge Alexanders des Grossen, Leipzig 1914, 92–93. Pearson did not even notice the possibility of a Hellenic Indica in his discussion on the ethnographical writings of H. (Pearson, Early Ionian Historians, Oxford 1939, 193–209). And Jacoby himself did not repeat this idea 1922 in FGrH where our fragment is included in the "Fragmente ungewisser Stellung".

<sup>16</sup> H. Kullmer, Die Historiæ des Hellanikos von Lesbos, Jahrbuch für klass. Philol., Suppl. 27, 1902, 664.

<sup>17</sup> Reese 93.

himself there has been so much talk of India in connection with him<sup>18</sup> that we cannot entirely refute Kullmer's hypothesis. The fact is that we cannot find the context for our fragment. A comparison with Herodotus, whose work has been preserved for us, shows how easily ethnographic *curiosa* could be fitted into any context. Herodotus several times mentioned India in other contexts than his actual excursus on India (3,98 – 106), thus e. g. the Indian dogs in 1,192 and the cannibal *Καλλαπίαι* in 3, 38. I suspect that Hellanicus probably mentioned our miraculous fountain in this way in some non-Indian context. If he had written something on India, there would probably be some mention of it in the historians of Alexander, in Diodorus, Strabo or some other later author.

Photius did not mention our fountain in his summary of Ctesias, but the genuineness of the fragments cannot be questioned. Ctesias was very fond of miraculous fountains and waters, in addition to Silas his fragments include no less than nine other fountains.<sup>19</sup> Ctesias was probably a source for Aristotle, who derived most of his knowledge on India from Ctesias<sup>20</sup> in spite of his famous negative judgements on him.<sup>21</sup> Hellanicus may or may not have been the source from which Ctesias derived his knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> E.g. in Xenophon, see Reese 95–96.

<sup>19</sup> A fountain with liquid gold and magnetic iron (F 45a § 9), a miraculous fountain in Zacynthos and another in Naxos (ib. 20), a lake with floating oil (ib. 25), a spring of honey (ib. 29), a curious "fountain of truth" (ib. 31), a fountain giving strength (*Βαλλάδη*, apparently with an Indian name, Sanskrit *balada*, ib. 49), an Armenian spring with poisonous black fishes (perhaps a parallel for some Indian wonder, F 61) and a spring with red or purple water giving a name for the *Ἐρυθρὰ θάλαττα* (F 66). This list only covers *Indica* and the fragments of uncertain origin.

<sup>20</sup> Aristotelian passages on India are collected by Reese 32–34, analysed ib. 98–104 and by P. Bolchert, *Aristoteles Erdkunde von Asien und Libyen*, Berlin 1908, 13–20. Jacoby's criticism in *RE XI*, 1922, 2072 – 2073 cannot disprove Aristotle's dependence upon Ctesias when India is concerned.

<sup>21</sup> *Hist. anim.* 8,28,p. 606 ὡς φησὶ Κτησίας οὐκ ὦν ἀξιόπιστος and 3,22,p. 523 Πευδὲς δ'ἔστι καὶ ὁ Κτησίας γέγραφε, *De gener. anim.* 2,2,p. 736 Κτησίας γὰρ ὁ Κνίδιος . . . φανερός ἐστιν ἐψευσμένος (all quoted by Bolchert 16).

<sup>22</sup> Ctesias mentioned Hellanicus among his sources for *Persica* (F 16 § 60), but he also made use of older literature on India which was also a possible source for Hellanicus.

On Democritus there is little to say. According to Strabo he was πολλήν τῆς Ἀσίας πεπλανημένος and a late tradition even ascribed Indian travels to him.<sup>23</sup> But that was only when India had become known as the country of the wise philosophers (e. g. the gymnosophists). Before Alexander's expedition no Greek philosopher would even have dreamt of going to India. This is well confirmed by the fact that our fragment is the only indication of any knowledge of India in Democritus.<sup>24</sup>

Megasthenes could have had some fresh information, but in light of the older fragments it seems likely that he was merely supplementing his description from Greek sources (probably from Ctesias).<sup>25</sup>

Otto Stein<sup>26</sup> tried to show that Megasthenes got his knowledge from Ctesias, who supposedly had connected elements from the "Indian" source (according to Stein probably Hecataeus) and Herodotus. But actually Ctesias' bad reputation seems to be the only argument. When we examine what Herodotus mentions<sup>27</sup> we can find some correspondence with some of our sources. Thus his ἐλαφρότερα is related to Hellanicus and ἐπιπλέειν and ἐς βυσσόν are found in Megasthenes. But nothing related to Ctesias! True, there is the miraculous lightness of the water, but this is common to all sources and has a clear Asian model. The whole can be seen though in an entirely different light. Ctesias was not transferring African wonders to Asia, it was Herodotus who was doing the opposite. As was shown by Albin Lesky,<sup>28</sup> the table of the sun and the miraculous fountain in Herodotus' Ethiopia were originally connected with the eastern Ethiopians, those of the rising sun. These

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Wecker, RE IX, 1916, 1324.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Reese 93–94. The sometimes supposed similarity between Democritus and some Indian doctrines is very superficial, and gives no reason for any speculations or even further discussion.

<sup>25</sup> See above, note 13.

<sup>26</sup> Stein 244–245, followed partly by P. Lindegger, Griechischen und römischen Quellen zum peripheren Tibet II, Ueberlieferungen von Herodot zu den Alexanderhistorikern (Die nördlichsten Grenzregionen Indiens), Rikon – Zürich 1982, 74–75.

<sup>27</sup> Hdt. 3,23.

<sup>28</sup> Aithiopika, Hermes 87 (1959) 27–38.

eastern Ethiopians were living – according to Herodotus himself<sup>29</sup> – in or near India,<sup>30</sup> and therefore it is perfectly possible that Herodotus was speaking of the same, "Indian" fountain. The Ichthyophagi who were sent by Cambyses to inspect Ethiopia and its wonders were Indian people.<sup>31</sup> The Ethiopians themselves are called μακροβίοι<sup>32</sup> and Ctesias (in Pliny)<sup>33</sup> mentioned them as an Indian people. It has been supposed that Ctesias moved the Ethiopian people to India, but their connection with our fountain indicates the opposite. In Indian tradition the people living on the further banks of the river Śailodā are the Uttarakurus, who are said to have a lifetime of several thousand years.<sup>34</sup> We can even consider Abicht's theory<sup>35</sup> that Herodotus was describing a naphtha well, because the word for naphtha in Sanskrit is derived from *śilā* 'stone',<sup>36</sup> which seems also to be the origin of our Silas.

That the name Silas and (to a certain extent) the marvel ascribed to the water have a parallel in Indian literature was first shown by Christian Lassen almost 150 years ago.<sup>37</sup> He pointed out some lines of Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata mentioning or describing a northern river called *Śilā* 'stone' or *Śailodā* 'stone water'. The crucial reference was from Rāmāyana and it was given without exact reference, because that part of the epic was then unedited.<sup>38</sup> In his *Indische Alterthumskunde*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Hdt. 3,94.

<sup>30</sup> In earlier tradition (beginning with Homer) they had nothing to do with India, which was then entirely outside the known world, but now we are concerned only with Hdt.

<sup>31</sup> Hdt. 3,98 and often in later literature.

<sup>32</sup> Hdt. 3,17.

<sup>33</sup> F 52.

<sup>34</sup> They have already been connected with Ctesianic Μακροβίοι by C. Lassen, *Indische Alterthumskunde* II, Bonn 1852, 653 and Wecker 1304–1305.

<sup>35</sup> Mentioned (but rejected) by Lesky 32.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. *śilāja*, *śaileya*.

<sup>37</sup> *Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 2 (1839) 63–64 (Lindegger 78 note 9 has mistaken this short-lived periodical for the well-known ZDMG).

<sup>38</sup> Lassen knew Rāmāyana well because he had collated its mss. in Paris for the edition begun (but left incomplete) by his teacher, A. W. von Schlegel.

<sup>39</sup> II, 652–653 (briefly also in 694 and I, 846).



Lassen only gave the facts relating to his earlier study and one additional line of Mahābhārata. The whole of the Rāmāyana was soon edited by G. Gorresio, but unfortunately Indische Alterthumskunde has been the main source for the Indian parallels of Silas in most cases. The only reference is thus Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana is left unmentioned.<sup>40</sup> The only exception among classical scholars<sup>41</sup> was Stein<sup>42</sup> who seems to have gone mostly unnoticed.

Indian sources are always referring to a river,<sup>43</sup> and its name is generally *Śailodā*, although *Śilā* is also used.<sup>44</sup> Most of the information we get from Sanskrit sources comes from two passages. In a description of presents brought from all the corners of the earth "the kings who live by the river Śailodā between Mount Meru and Mount Mandara and enjoy the pleasing shade of bamboo and cane, the Khasas, Ekāśanas. . . and further Tanganas, they brought the gold called Pipīlaka, which is granted as a boon by the *pipīlaka* ants, and they brought it by bucketsful and piles."<sup>45</sup> In the description of the northern direction in Rāmāyana we have the following passage: "After having gone through this country (you will find) a river called Śailodā, and on both its sides (grow) reeds called kīcakas. They bring the perfect ones to the other

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Schwanbeck, Megasthenis Indica, Bonn 1846, 37 (refers to ZKM but not to Rām.), McCrindle, Ancient India as described in Classical Literature, Westminster 1901, 47, Wecker in RE-articles India (1916) and Silas (1929), Brown, The Greek Historians, Lexington etc. 1973, 103 and Lindegger 78–79.

<sup>41</sup> Rāmāyana is quoted in the great "Petersburger Wörterbuch" (Böhtlingk – Roth, Sanskrit-Wörterbuch 1–7, St.Pet. 1855–1875) s.v. *śailodā*.

<sup>42</sup> Stein 307.

<sup>43</sup> A lake is mentioned as its origin in some Purāṇas, cf. Kirfel, Kosmographie der Inder nach Quellen dargestellt, Bonn 1920, 59.

<sup>44</sup> Mahābhārata 6,7,22 and Rāmāyana 2,65,2 (my references are somewhat different from those in older studies, because I am always referring to the critical editions). A Purāṇic reference in Kirfel 66 (from Matsyapurāṇa) is worthless because of textual difficulties.

<sup>45</sup> Van Buitenen's translation of Mahābhārata 2,48, 2–4 (cr.ed.): *merumandarayor madhye śailodām abhito nadīm/ ye te kīcakavenūnām chāyām ramyām upāsate// khaśā, ekāśanā . . . paratangaṇāḥ// te vai pipīlikam nāma varadattam pipīlikaiḥ/ jātārūpam droṇameyam abārṣuḥ puñjaśo nrpāḥ//*

side and back again.”<sup>46</sup> The critical edition goes on to a description of the Uttarakurus (“There live the U. on the strength of their past good deeds. . .”), but in all northern recensions there is an explanation inserted: “This holy river (is) very difficult to cross, (otherwise) it cannot be crossed, because everything changes into stone after having touched its water. But those big kīcaka reeds growing on (both) its sides can meet each other without impediment.”<sup>47</sup> In both epics the river is placed in the north, either in Tibet or in Central Asia. Some Purāṇic evidence points more to the northwest, perhaps to Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup>

It is a well-known fact that the same river is mentioned in Chinese sources, where it is called *Jo-shui*, ‘soft water’, and located in the southwest, north of India.<sup>49</sup> But it has been more or less unknown that there is also a parallel in Indian Buddhist literature.<sup>50</sup> In *Nimijātaka* we read that there is “in the north a river (called) *Sīdā*, deep and difficult to cross, and golden mountains shine always like a fire of reeds (with) high growing tagara shrubs and high mountain forests. There live the ancient sages who are ten thousand years old.”<sup>51</sup> The commentary to the same is very interesting to us: “. . .the river called *Sīdā* is deep and difficult to cross with boats. Why? Because its water is very light. Because of the lightness of the water even a peacock’s tail-feather fallen in it cannot remain (on the surface) but goes sinking to the bottom.

<sup>46</sup> Rāmāyana 4,42,37–38 (critical edition): *taṃ tu deśam atikramya śailodā nāma nim-nagā/ubhayos tīrayor yasyāḥ kīcakā nāma veṇavaḥ//te nayanti param tīraṃ siddhān pratyānayanti ca/uttarāḥ kuravas tatra kṛtapuṇyapraṭīśrayāḥ//* (my translation).

<sup>47</sup> Insertion No. 930 (before 38cd, in some mss. before 38) in critical edition: *sā na śakyā nadī tartuṃ puṇyā paramadurgamā/tasyāḥ sprṣṭvā tu salilaṃ sarvaḥ śailo ’bhijāyate//te tu tīragatās tasyā mahākīcakaveṇavaḥ/samāgacchanty asaṃgena saṃgamam te parasparam//* (my translation).

<sup>48</sup> Kirfel 59 and Tucci, East and West 14 (1963) 173.

<sup>49</sup> Pointed out already by S. Beal, Si-yu ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World I, London 1884 (repr. Delhi 1981), 12, then by Stein 308, analysed by Lindegger 75ff.

<sup>50</sup> Mentioned already by Beal 12, then by Conrady (quoted by Stein 307–308), but mostly left unnoticed.

<sup>51</sup> Jātaka No. 541, 424–425: *uttarena nadī sīdā gambhīrā duratikkamā/nalaggivaṇṇā jotanti sadā kañcanapabbatā//parūḷhakacchā tagarā rūḷhakacchā vanā nagā/tatrāsum dasasahassā porāṇaisayo pure//* (my translation).

Therefore even its name is *Sīdā*.<sup>52</sup> The same idea is met in the Chinese sources on Jo-shui, which cannot "keep even a feather on its surface".<sup>53</sup>

Buddhist – both Chinese and Indian – sources seem to connect our river with the river *Sītā/Sītā*,<sup>54</sup> mentioned often in Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana and Purāṇas, sometimes as the river next to Śailodā, and mostly identified with the Yarkand river of Central Asia.<sup>55</sup> In this connection we can note that especially in Jaina cosmographies a river called *Śītodā*, 'cool water',<sup>56</sup> is often mentioned.

All these Asian sources are later than the Greek reports of Silas. But although the final redaction of Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana and Jātaka (canonical strophes with commentary) seems to be less than 2000 years old, all these works contain to a great extent much earlier material. The fact alone that our river is met in three traditions (Sanskrit, Pāli and Chinese) makes it very unlikely that it could be borrowed from western sources, and on the whole such borrowing is improbable.<sup>57</sup> It has been suggested that the Chinese borrowed some classical motifs (via Alexander Romance), but their geographical context is in the northeast.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Jātaka-commentary (Fausbøll VI, 100): *sīdā nāma nadī gambhīrā nāvāhi pi duratik-kamā ahoṣi, kiṃkāraṇā: sā hi atisukhumodakā, sukhumattā udakassa antamaso morapiñjam pi tattha patitaṃ na saṅhāti sīditvā hetthātaḷam eva gacchati ten' ev' assā Sīdā ti nāmaṃ ahoṣi*. The commentary connects the name with *sīdati* 'sinks'.

<sup>53</sup> Lindegger 76.

<sup>54</sup> In Sanskrit sources often connected with *śīta* 'cool'.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Lindegger 79.

<sup>56</sup> Kirfel, index.

<sup>57</sup> At the end of the 19th century many scholars tried to find western influence in Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana (e.g. A. Weber, Ueber das Rāmāyana, Sitzungsber. der preuss. Akad. der Wiss. 1870, 1–88), but the results were meagre, consisting only of superficial or doubtful similarities. Most of them have been rejected since then. As for the Alexander Romance, which has brought many classical legends everywhere in Europe and Asia, its influence in India has been shown only in a late text (Jaimini-Aśvamedha, perhaps from 12th century, see Derrett, ZRGG 22 [1970] 19–44).

<sup>58</sup> Amazones and dog-heads, see Laufer, Festschrift E. Kuhn 1916, 204ff. It is interesting to notice that the direction (northeast) is the same, although its geographical meaning is rather different in western Alexander Romance and China. A third point mentioned by Laufer (but not in the northeast) are the Pygmies fighting with cranes, for them cf. John Tu Er-Wei and J. Baumgartner, Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society 5 (1977) 76–82.

Jo-shui and some tales connected with it are located in the southwest and the connection with local and Indian tradition seems more likely than a borrowing from the west.

Returning to the Silas river of Greek literature we can note that its eastern origin is unquestionable. According to our geographical ideas, its real origin is not in India,<sup>59</sup> but somewhere in Central Asia or even Tibet. Yet we must keep in mind that before Alexander's Indian expedition "India" meant more or less the area known nowadays as Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan. And moreover, many things referred to by Herodotus, Ctesias and other early authors as Indian, seem to have a Central Asian origin.<sup>60</sup> Now it is interesting to notice that the very passages we have examined for parallels with Silas also contain some other such features. The ant gold<sup>61</sup> is said to be brought to India from the banks of the Śailodā. Beyond this river is the country of the long-lived Uttarakuru. Some early (7th century) Chinese sources put the country of Amazones<sup>62</sup> and dog-heads in the same region as our river.<sup>63</sup>

As regards the name, the eastern parallels have only confused the question. Śailodā is not attested to western<sup>64</sup> sources, but Śītā/Śītā/Sīdā<sup>64</sup> seems to give some force to the Plinian *Siden*.<sup>65</sup> For the forms with λλ

<sup>59</sup> I have written very little of the geographical location on purpose. The evidence for Yarkand (accepted by Stein 309) seems to me only secondary. Śailodā with its parallels was a mythical river, an uncrossable boundary to the earthen paradise of the Uttarakuru where milk and honey were flowing, jewels and gold were in place of stones and sand and people lived several millennia (described by Kirfel 109).

<sup>60</sup> Lindegger passim.

<sup>61</sup> Hdt. 3,102–105, then Nearchus FGrH 133 F 8 and Megasthenes F 23, cf. Lindegger 29–50.

<sup>62</sup> As there is a kingdom of women (Sanskrit *strīrājya*) mentioned in Sanskrit sources from Mahābhārata onwards and located in the same region (cf. Lindegger 46), it is not so clear that influence from Alexander Romance is the origin of these southwestern Amazones of the Chinese.

<sup>63</sup> Dog-heads as Indian people described by Ctesias (cf. my paper in *Arctos* 18 [1984] 31–36). Chinese sources (Annales of Sui and Hsüan tsang) quoted by Lindegger 59–61.

<sup>64</sup> Stein 308 suggested that *śītā* is perhaps only "eine neuerliche Sanskritbildung aus einem missverstandenen Sīdā".

<sup>65</sup> Lindegger 79.

we can mention some parallels where *l* between vowels in Sanskrit is represented with  $\lambda\lambda$  in Greek.<sup>66</sup> It is possible that our miraculous fountain or river is brought to Greek literature at least twice,<sup>67</sup> with a slightly different form of its name. Scylax has been readily named as the ultimate Greek source of it,<sup>68</sup> but we should be very careful in reconstructing the influence of a book of which we do not even know for certain whether it existed and had any circulation.<sup>69</sup> The amount of early literature which has disappeared for ever is so enormous and the opportunities for getting fresh information – not directly from India but from Persia<sup>70</sup> – were so easy that we really cannot give any definite answer to the question of an ultimate Greek source.

*Addition:* Only when this article was already sent to the press I learnt to know the interesting paper "Le mythe de Śilā, fleuve Indien" by Joanna Sachse in *Eos* 70 (1982) 237–241. Her point of view is rather different and there is no need to revise my discussion but referring to her comparisons of Silas with several rivers of the underworld.

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<sup>66</sup> ὀπάλλιος 'opal' < *upala* 'stone' and Ctesianic Βαλλάδη 'giving strength' < *balada* id.

<sup>67</sup> Hdt. is perhaps a third instance.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. Lindegger 80.

<sup>69</sup> The few fragments ascribed to him (FGrH 709) can all be derived from Hecataeus who could have other sources. In a similar way early Greek knowledge of Scythia has too often been tried to derive solely from Aristeas (see Herington's criticism, *Phoenix* 18 [1964] 79).

<sup>70</sup> The presence of Achaemenids in northwestern India is shown beyond question by recent archaeological finds, cf. F.L. Holt's summary in *The Ancient World* 9 (1984) 6–7.