

until after a period of five hundred years that the accuracy of the fact was re-established by Ptolemy. Herodotus and Aristotle entertained correct views regarding this subject, and the latter fortunately wrote his *Meteorologica* before the Asiatic campaigns of Alexander. The Olbiopolites, from whose lips the father of history derived his information, were well acquainted with the northern shores of the Caspian Sea, between Cuma, the Volga (Rha), and the Jaik (Ural), but there were no indications that could lead to the supposition of its connection with the Icy Sea. Very different causes led to the deception of Alexander's army, when, passing through Hecatompylos (Damaghan) to the humid forests of Mazanderan, at Zadrakarta, a little to the west of the present Asterabad, they saw the Caspian Sea stretching northward in an apparently boundless expanse of waters. This sight first gave rise, as Plutarch remarks in his *Life of Alexander*, to the conjecture that the sea they beheld was a bay of the Euxine.* The Macedonian expedition, although, on the whole, extremely favorable to the advance of geographical knowledge, nevertheless gave rise to some errors which long held their ground. The Tanais was confounded with the Jaxartes (the Araxes of Herodotus), and the Caucasus with the Paropanisus (the Hindoo-Coosh). Ptolemy was enabled, during his residence in Alexandria, as well as from the expeditions of the Aorsi, whose camels brought Indian and Babylonian goods to the Don and the Black Sea,† to obtain accurate knowledge of the countries which immediately surrounded the Caspian (as, for instance, Albania, Atropatene, and Hyrcania). If Ptolemy, in contradiction to the more correct knowledge of Herodotus, believed that the greater diameter of the Caspian Sea inclined from west to east, he might, perhaps, have been misled by a vague knowledge of the former great extension of the Scythian gulf (Karabogas), and the existence of Lake Aral, the earliest definite notice of which we find in the work of a Byzantine author, Menander, who wrote a continuation of Agathias.‡

It is to be regretted that Ptolemy, who had arrived at so correct a knowledge of the complete insulation of the Caspian (after it had long been considered to be open, in accordance with the hypothesis of four gulfs, and even according to sup-

* See my *Examen Crit. de l'Hist. de la Géographie*, t. ii., p. 147-188

† Strabo, lib. xi., p. 506.

‡ Menander, *De Legationibus Barbarorum ad Romanos, et Romanorum ad Gentes*, e rec. Bekkeri et Niebuhr, 1829, p. 300, 619, 623, and 628