

elling from China to Tibet, have a much longer slope to the east or Chinese side, than to the west or Tibetan side. Then follows this passage, which is very clever for being 220 years old: »The small mountains, in which the little river of Altan kol takes its source, must indeed be extremely elevated over the surface of the Sea, as this river which is rather rapid falls in the lakes of Tsing sou haï, while the river Hoang ho which issues from the Lakes, has for about hundred leagues a fairly rapid course until its mouth in the Eastern Sea of China; but this country is also very cold on account of its height: as soon as one commences to enter Tibet the ground begins to fall, and the climate is then also much more tempered.»

At a time when Koko-nor was still treated as a suspicious object on European maps, Gerbillon knew that Si hai or the Western Sea, as it was also called, had a length of 20 long leagues, and more than 10 leagues in breadth, and that it was situated between 36 and 37° N. lat., and between 16 and 17° W. long. of Peking. From the west frontier of China he reckons 20 days' journey to Hami, thence to Turfan 7 days, from Turfan to Acsou 23 days, from Acsou to Yarkan 10 days, and from Yarkan to Bochara hardly more than a month, along the road which passes over Kaskar. He gives short, concise and excellent descriptions of roads, countries, climates and natives, and is far in front of his time.

Compared with the other geographers I have quoted above, all of whom ruminate the same old worn material, Gerbillon's annotation about Koko-nor, the source of the Yellow River, and the roads to Lhasa and Bokhara comes like a refreshing breeze of solid information from mountains and deserts in darkest Asia.

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