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MEMOIRS  
AND  
OBSERVATIONS

Topographical, } [ Natural,  
Physical, } [ Civil,  
Mathematical, } and  
Mechanical, } [ Ecclesiastical.

307777 Made in a late

JOURNEY  
Through the  
EMPIRE of CHINA,  
And Published in several Letters.

Particularly upon the *Chinese* Pottery and Varnishing; the Silk and other Manufactures; the Pearl Fishing; the History of Plants and Animals. Description of their Cities and Publick Works; Number of People, their Language, Manners and Commerce; their Habits, Oeconomy, and Government. The Philosophy of *Confucius*. The State of Christianity, with many other Curious and Useful Remarks.

By LOUIS LE COMPTE Jesuit,  
Confessor to the Dutchess of Burgundy, one of the Royal Mathematicians, and lately Missionary into the Eastern Countries.

Translated from the Paris Edition, and illustrated with Figures.

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our hand, and we always took care to observe ever and anon upon the Road, the Meridian Altitude of every particular Star, to correct our estimate, and determine more exactly the Latitude of the principal Cities of the Country.

Whereupon, Sir, I cannot forbear making some reflections in this place, which may one day be useful perhaps for the resolving a material Problem in *Physics*. Men are not yet sure whether all Seas in the World be upon the level one with another. The generous Principles of sound Philosophy, will have it that all Liquor of the same Kind, that Communicate own with another, do spread uniformly, whether by their own weight, or by the pressure of the Air; and at last take the same Surface. Most of the Experiments are in this Point pretty congruous to Reason; yet some later Reflections have started a doubt whether or no the Sea had not really some inclination, and were not more elevated in some certain places than in others. What I have remarked touching this last Map I but now mentioned, seems to back this last Opinion:

For in the Provinces of *Canton*, and *Kiansi*, is to be seen a Mountain out of which issues two Rivers, the one flows towards the South; and after it has watered fifty Leagues of the Country, it dismbogues into the Sea near the City of *Quamscheou*, the other flows contrary, *viz.* to the North, crosses several Provinces for the space of two hundred Leagues, and turns aside insensibly, and enters into the East Sea, or Sea of *Japan*, insomuch that the *emboucheurs*, or mouths of the two Rivers are not distant one from another (if you do but even follow the Coasts that separate them) above three hundred Leagues or thereabouts.

Nevertheless, the Northern River seems more rapid in its whole Course, than *those* of the South, and being besides four times longer, it must needs be that the

the Seas, where both of them meet, have a different elevation, or which is the same thing, are not upon the self same level.

I shall not speak, Sir, of several other Maps, wherein we have reform'd part of the Coasts of *Coromandel*, of *Peseberie*, *Molucca*, *Mergui*, and of *Camboje*, because they have not yet attained to that Perfection, that we hope we may be able to give them hereafter. But yet I have two of them that at present may venture to come abroad: the one represents the entrance into the Port of *Nimpo*, the most dangerous in all the World, by reason of the multitude of Isles, and Rocks that cover it on all sides; and put the skilfullest Pilots to a stand. We have subjoined thereto the Course from *Siam* to *China*, with a prospect of the chief Coasts, or Isles that are not met with by the way.

The other is still more curious, and indeed the only one in its Kind, the little occasion the *Europeans* have hitherto had to Sail into the great *Tartan*, obliged Geographers to make use, in their Descriptions of it, of I know not what memorandums, so little consistent with truth; that, as far as I see, they have purposely set themselves to deprive us of the knowledge of it. But the War breaking out, some years ago, between the Emperor of *China* and the Duke of *Moscovy*, they have on all sides diligently examined the limits of Realms, the bigness of Provinces, the fertility of Lands, Rivers, Mountains, Deserts, and whatsoever could any way be advantageous to these two Provinces, and might conduce in time to come, to conclude a solid lasting Peace between them.

Besides these *Memoires*, that fell into Father *Gerbillon's* hands, the Father hath also taken several Journeys of three or four hundred Leagues into the very Heart of the Country; going sometimes toward the West, sometimes to the South, observing as much as possibly could be, the Longitude, and Latitude of the most

most remarkable Places. So that the Map that he hath drawn out, begins at present to supply us with a right *Idea* of the disposition, and situation of this vast Country.

Amongst the things that are most singular in that Country, one may observe a ridge of Mountains, that are extended so far into the Sea between the East and North, that it hath been, to this day, almost impossible for Mariners to know or to double its Cape; which makes some suspect that this part of *Asia* may peradventure be at this place contiguous to the firm Land of *America*. We have besides all this, made several Observations concerning the variation of the Needle upon Tides, upon the length of a single Pendulum, which may however contribute something to the Perfection of Arts and Sciences.

Yet these general Observations have not so much taken up our time but that we have spared some to examine what there is in the East most curious, in the way of Natural Philosophy, Anatomy, and Botany.

Our Sojourning at *Siam* afforded us an opportunity, to view several particular Animals, which we seldom or never see in *Europe*; as for example the Elephant, the Nature of which we have described, as also its Docibleness, Strength, Courage, Dexterity, the interior, and exterior Contexture of all its Parts; together with divers other Properties, that the very People of that Country, that are accustomed to them, cannot chuse but admire.

There have we seen Tygres, much different from those that are sometimes to be seen in *France*, and other Countries; whether you look upon the colour, which is redish fallow, interlaced with large black streaks, or whether you respect the bigness, which sometimes is equal to the bigness of Horses; they call them *Royal Tygres*: those they call Water Tygres do exactly resemble a Cat. They live upon Fish, but

do commonly live in Woods, or upon the Banks of Rivers.

There is likewise to be seen your *Rhinoceros's*, one of the oddest Animals in the World, in my Opinion, it hath some resemblance with a wild Boar, only it is a little bigger, the Feet of it somewhat thicker, and the Body more clouterly shaped; its Hide is covered all over with thick large Scales, of a blackish colour, of an extraordinary hardness; they are divided into little squares, or buttons, rising about a quarter of an inch above the Skin, in a manner like those of the Crocodile; its Legs seem to be engaged in a kind of Boot, and its Head wrap'd about behind with a flat Capuche, or Monks Hood; which made the *Portuguese* to call him the *Indian Monk*: its Head is thick and gross; its Mouth not wide; its Muzzle thrust out, and armed with a long thick Horn, that makes him terrible to the very Tygres, Bufulo's and Elephants.

But that which seems the most admirable in this Animal, is its Tongue, which Nature hath covered with such a rough Membrane, that it differs but little from a File, so that it flees off the Skin of all that it licks. In a word, as we see some Animals here that make a good Ragoust of Thistles, whose little pricks tickle the Fibres, or the extremities of the Nerves of the Tongue: so likewise your *Rhinoceros*, takes delight in eating Branches of Trees, armed on all sides with stiff Thorns, I have often given it some of them, whose prickles were very hard and long, and I admired how cunningly and greedily it bended them immediatly, and champ'd them in its Mouth without doing itself any harm. 'Tis true indeed, they sometimes drew blood of him; but that very thing made them more pleasant to the Talt; and these little slight Wounds, made probably no other impression upon its Tongue, than Salt and Pepper does upon ours.

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