Ours is an age of renewed interest in world history. The enthusiastic reception given William McNeill's *The Rise of the West* a few years ago amply illustrates our concern for written history that embraces the entire human community and that transcends national, religious, and cultural boundaries. Courses in world history or world civilization seem to be replacing the traditional Western civilization courses in our colleges, and we are inundated with textbooks that try to integrate bits of Asian and African history with that of the West. Comparative historical studies abound. We have created international commissions for the writing of world history, such as the UNESCO project, in the hope of more successfully avoiding parochial interpretations. The parochial labels and phrases that still clutter our professional vocabulary are gradually being replaced by more descriptive terms: Oriental has become Asian; the Far East is now East Asia; and the Near East may become the Eastern Mediterranean. It is obvious that world history is one of the major concerns of this generation's historians.

Interest in world history did not begin in our day, of course. Historians in the Western, Christian tradition have always been concerned with world history—universal history, they called it. Universal histories also pretended to be histories of mankind. They described man's beginnings and his development through all the time he had been on earth. But while their titles typically embraced "the history of the world from its creation to our own day," the world described between their covers was usually limited to the ancient Near East, Greece, Rome, and Western Christendom. The most obvious change since the day of the old universal history has been a redefinition of what should be included in world history—a change toward geographic universality as well as or even in place of chronological universality.

The redefinition of the content of world history also has had a fairly long history in the West. At least since the Renaissance, Western scholars have had to assimilate newly discovered information, both from antiquity and from the non-European world, with their view of world history. Usually this new information could be accommodated without impairing the traditional struc-
ture of universal history. Frequently the authenticity and accuracy of the new information could be questioned. In 1658, however, the Jesuit missionary Martinio Martini published Europe’s first systematic account of ancient Chinese history—a history that seriously challenged the traditional structure, and a history whose claims to authenticity could not easily be dismissed.¹ Martini’s “discovery” of ancient Chinese history inaugurated one of the stormier centuries in the history of Western historiography and in the end precipitated significant changes in the way world history was written.

Organization, the way in which the story of mankind is divided, presents a major problem to any writer of world history. In our day we have come to see the inadequacy of the customary division of history into ancient, medieval, and modern eras that must include China, Japan, India, and Africa as well as the Western world. In the seventeenth century as well, there were generally accepted ways of dividing the story. Universal history was commonly divided into the sacred and the profane. Sacred history was derived from the Old and New Testaments and continued in the history of the Church; profane history was based on any other documents. There were subdivisions. Sacred history typically came in three dispensations: that of the law of nature, from the Creation to Moses; that of the written law, from Moses to Christ; and that of grace, from Christ to the writer’s own day. Profane history was sometimes divided into three periods, reflecting the type and reliability of the sources: obscure or uncertain time, extending from the Creation to the appearance of the earliest Greek fables; fabulous or heroic time, up to the establishment of the Olympic Games; and historic time. More commonly, profane history was divided into four large periods, each dominated by one of the four great monarchies supposedly prophesied in the Book of Daniel:² the Assyrian or Babylonian, founded by the Biblical Nimrod;³ the Persian; the Greek; and the Roman, which was usually thought to continue into the writer’s own day. Many universal histories were divided into smaller periods called epochs, which took their names from significant historical events. The epochs varied somewhat from writer to writer, but those of the universal

¹ Martinio Martini, Sinicae historiae decas prima res a gentis origine ad Christum natum in extrema Asia, sive magno Sinarum imperio gestas complexa (Amsterdam, 1659). First edition, Munich, 1658.
² Daniel 2:31–49.
³ Nimrod was the fourth-generation descendant of Noah in the line of Ham. The description of his deeds in Genesis 10:8–11 was traditionally understood to include the founding of the Babylonian or Assyrian monarchy. For examples see Hilmar Curas, Einleitung zur Universalhistorie, zum Gebrauche bey dem ersten Unterrichte der Jugend . . . (Berlin and Stettin, 1816), 82; Willem Goeree, De kerklyke en weereldlyke historien (2d ed.; Leiden, 1730), 30; Johann Ludwig Gottfried, Historische Chronica, oder Beschreibung der vornehmsten Geschichten, so sich vom Anfang der Welt bis auf der Jahr Christi 1619 zugetragen, nach Abtheilung der 4 Monarchien und beygefügter Jahrrechnung aufs fließigste in Ordnung gebracht (Frankfort, 1630), 23; Matthias Prideaux, An Easy and Compendious Introduction for Reading all Sorts of Histories . . . (4th ed.; Oxford, 1664), 159–60; or Giles Strauchius, Breviarum chronologicum: or a Treatise Describing the Terms and Most Celebrated Characters, Periods, and Epochas Used in Chronology . . ., tr. Richard Sault (3d ed.; London, 1722), 182.
flood, the calling of Abraham, the conquest of Troy, the exodus from Egypt, and the founding of Rome were commonly used.

To most seventeenth-century historians the only reliable account of man's earliest history was to be found in the Old Testament. For these early ages, therefore, sacred and profane history were identical, since both depended on the same source. History began with God's creation of the world and the first man, Adam. It began again, in effect, with Noah and his three sons after the universal flood. All humans, then, were descended from Adam through Noah. Most, if not all, of the world's nations had their origin still later in the dispersion of tribes from the Plain of Shinar narrated in the Biblical account of the Tower of Babel. If the evidence had been accurately preserved, therefore, all nations would be able to trace their lineage back to Babel and back to one of the sons of Noah, beyond which all men had a common ancestry. Few peoples other than the Jews, however, had preserved a knowledge of their earliest history. Worse still, later generations had often mythically and poetically elaborated the story of their origins in accounts that were subsequently judged to have historical value. But to seventeenth-century Europeans, only the inspired Old Testament provided certainty concerning the world's earliest history, and consequently traditional universal historians tested the ancient annals or records of any people by their conformity to that one reliable account.

If the traditional histories were something less than geographically universal, they were indeed chronologically universal. They began with the beginning of time—with the Creation—and usually dealt with all of the time intervening between creation and the terminal date of the book. An accurate chronology of the events described in Genesis, therefore, was crucially important; "the handles of history," one chronologist called it. European scholars worked carefully through the Old Testament, calculating from the genealogies in Genesis and other books what they believed to be the correct dates for such important events as the exodus from Egypt, the calling of Abraham, the confusion of tongues at Babel, the universal flood, and, of course, the creation of the world. But the chronologies compiled in this fashion varied greatly depending on the chronologist's method and on which version of the Old Testament he used. For example, according to computations based on the Hebrew Masoretic texts, the universal flood described in Genesis occurred 1,656 years after the creation of the world. According to the Samaritan Pentateuch, however, only 1,307 years separated the two events, while calculations based on the Greek Septuagint version gave intervals of 2,242, 2,262, or 2,256 years. Those scholars who used the Masoretic

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5 John Blair, Chronology and History of the World from Creation to the Year of Christ 1753 Illustrated in LVI Tables (London, 1756), i.
6 The Masoretic texts are the improved and standardized texts produced by Jewish scholars between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D. The Septuagint is the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures traditionally thought to be the work of seventy Alexandrian scholars during the
texts for their computations observed that all extant Hebrew texts agreed and that St. Jerome's Vulgate, based on manuscripts no longer available, supported and confirmed the Hebrew-text computations. Partisans of the Septuagint version, however, pointed to the agreement between existing Greek copies to demonstrate that differences between the Greek and Hebrew versions were not the result of copyists' errors, but that the Septuagint translators had used Hebrew manuscripts older than those available to St. Jerome or still available to seventeenth-century scholars. They observed, furthermore, that while the Church had used the Vulgate for the last millennium, during the first centuries of its existence it had used the Septuagint. Although unanimity could not be achieved among seventeenth-century scholars concerning ancient Biblical chronology, that based on the Hebrew Masoretic texts was by far the most commonly accepted. Archbishop Ussher's prestigious chronological study was widely acclaimed and came to be regarded almost as orthodoxy. The authority of Ussher's computations can be illustrated by the fact that his dates were inserted into the margins of the English Authorized Version of the Bible after 1700. According to Ussher, the world was created in 4004 B.C., and the universal flood occurred 1,656 years later, in 2348 B.C.

The wide acceptance of the traditional format of universal history and of the chronology based on Hebrew texts produced numerous universal histories that looked very much alike. When, for example, Andreas Imhof introduced his *Neu-eröffneten historischen Bilder-Saal* in 1692, he lavishly praised Johann Gottfried's *Historische Chronica* and frankly acknowledged his debt to the earlier historian. To Imhof a new universal history seemed necessary not because new archives had been opened, new information discovered, or a new way of organizing the material developed, but because Gottfried's book was too expensive, because its plates were not properly integrated with the text, and because Gottfried occasionally displayed more religious partisanship than Imhof would have liked. Eleven years later Nicolas Guedeville published a universal history that, although not a direct

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Andreas Lazurus Imhof, *Neu-eröffneten historischen Bilder-Saal, das ist: kurze deutliche und unpassionirte Beschreibung der Historiae Universalis von Anfang der Welt bis auf unsere Zeiten in ordentliche und merksame Periodos und Capitul eingetheilet . . .* (Nuremberg, 1698), xiii.
Perhaps the most serious challenge to the traditional scheme of world history and the factor most instrumental in changing that scheme was the "discovery" of ancient Chinese history. The first bits of information about ancient Chinese history were included in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century descriptions of China, but they caused little alarm in Europe. Already in 1584 the Spanish Augustinian Juan Gonzales de Mendoza had included in his history a "Genealogy of the Kings of China," which dated the first monarch at 2550 or 2600 B.C.—long before the universal flood. But Mendoza presented only a list of obscurely romanized names with no convincing detail to support them. Subsequent writers described events such as the building of the Great Wall and the thirteenth-century Mongol conquest, but they said virtually nothing about ancient Chinese history. Alvaro Semmedo, for example, observed that Chinese historians claimed a very high antiquity for their empire, but he distrusted the accuracy of the early Chinese records. The Jesuit missionaries in China, however, soon learned about ancient China and realized that if the Chinese histories were accurate they posed serious problems for Western scholars. Apparently as early as 1637, after much discussion and negotiation, the missionaries received permission to use a Septuagint-based chronology for their work in China in order to accommodate the generally accepted dates for China's first emperors. The information available to European readers before 1658, however, was much too vague to create problems. They only knew that China was very old, a rather unimpressive bit of information compared with the many other wonderful things being written about the Middle Kingdom. But the publication of Father Martini's Sinicae historiae in 1658 dispelled the earlier obscurity and clearly placed the challenge of ancient Chinese history before European readers.

Martini's book attempted to trace Chinese history from earliest times to the birth of Christ, or the middle of the Han dynasty. He began his history

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10 Nicolas Guedeville, Le grand théâtre historique ou nouvelle histoire universelle, tant sacrée que profane depuis la création du monde, jusqu'au commencement du XVIIIe siècle (Leiden, 1709). For an earlier and widely known example of the traditional universal history, see Johannes Sleidanus, De quatuor summis imperiis libri tres (Amsterdam, 1564).
12 For example, see Nicolas Trigault, De christiana expeditione apud Sinas . . . (Augsburg, 1615), and Alvaro Semmedo, Imperio de la China; i cultura evangelica en el por los religios de la Compania de Jesus (Madrid, 1642).
14 Antoine Gaubil, Traité de la chronologie chinoise, divisé en trois parties, composé par le Père Gaubil, missionaire à la Chine, et publiée pour servir de suite aux mémoires concernant les Chinois, par M. Silvestre de Sacy (Paris, 1814), 283-85.
with Fu Hsi, the first legendary sage emperor, whose reign, Martini calculated, began in 2952 B.C. Martini dismissed the long dynasties that were supposed to have reigned before Fu Hsi as myth, observing that most Chinese scholars did the same, but he did not question the authenticity of Fu Hsi and his successors. After describing Fu Hsi, Martini traced the traditional succession of sage emperors and ancient dynasties, devoting to each emperor a brief chapter in which he chronicled the emperor’s outstanding achievements and the major events of his reign. Much of the Sinicae historiae makes dull reading, although the controversies it provoked among European scholars were anything but dull. Martini’s history included seven Chinese emperors who apparently reigned before the generally accepted date for the Biblical deluge (2349 B.C.), in which all the people on earth except Noah and his family were supposed to have drowned. Martini, of course, was aware of the problem this created. He reported that the Chinese annals on which he had based his work described a great flood that occurred about 3000 B.C. in such a way that one could interpret it as the Genesis flood. But even if the Chinese annals and Genesis were describing the same flood and the two chronologies could be reconciled, there remained additional problems. According to Chinese tradition, Fu Hsi was merely the first emperor; the land had been inhabited for a very long time before his reign. Fu Hsi was supposed to have been expert in astronomy, a science whose development, Martini reasoned, required long stretches of time. “I am certain,” he wrote, “that outermost Asia was inhabited before the deluge.”

He made no attempt to explain how the Chinese had preserved records of their antediluvian history, nor did he try to reconcile the ancient Chinese chronology with that based on the Hebrew Old Testament. These, he declared, were not his concerns.

Many European scholars, however, quickly made it their concern to reconcile ancient Chinese chronology with that based on the Old Testament. One of the first to deal with the problem was Isaac Vossius, an expatriate Dutch scholar with an almost limitless admiration for things Chinese. The ink of the Sinicae historiae had scarcely dried before Vossius came out with a book contending that, on the basis of the Chinese chronology, the traditional Biblical chronology derived from Hebrew texts was inaccurate and that a chronology based on the Septuagint version of the Old Testament should be accepted in its place. The Septuagint-derived chronologies placed the Genesis flood back in the fourth millennium B.C., making it relatively easy to accept Martini’s ancient Chinese dates. But Vossius went further still. Even with the additional centuries provided by a Septuagint chronology, he had difficulty accommodating ancient Chinese history to the notion of a universal flood. Finding no compelling reasons why the flood should have been universal, he concluded that the deluge described in Genesis had been a local phenomenon. Scholars had argued before in favor of the Septuagint

15 Martini, Sinicae historiae, 12; “Hanc enim qua de scribo, extremam Asiam ante diluvium habitatem fuisse pro certo habeo.” Ibid., 21.
and against the universality of the flood, and most of Vossius’ arguments were not novel. His insistence that the Chinese historical annals disproved the traditional picture of ancient history and chronology, however, was new. In sum, Vossius, like Martini, was so impressed by the accuracy of the ancient Chinese annals that he preferred them in case of conflict and questioned instead the traditional Biblical chronology and the universality of the Genesis story.

Vossius’ ideas naturally met considerable opposition. Many scholars were horrified by his cavalier treatment of Old Testament history. But those who clung to the traditional Hebrew-text chronology were left only two alternatives: they could reject the Chinese annals as myth, or they could attempt to correlate them in some fashion with the traditional chronology. To be sure, some scholars adamantly refused to accept the Chinese annals, but many were anxious to find some way of reconciling the two ancient chronologies. The Chinese record as described by Martini was not easily disregarded; it looked exceedingly impressive to seventeenth-century Europeans. Compared with the ancient literature of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, it seemed remarkably free of miraculous or fantastic tales. Furthermore the impressive—indeed, almost unbroken—continuity of the Chinese record lent an aura of authenticity to the story it told. And when Martini related how Chinese historians often marked important events by observing the positions of stars and planets, who in Isaac Newton’s century would not be impressed?

Georg Horn, a Leiden theologian and historian who published a refutation of Vossius’ book soon after it appeared, provides an intriguing example of the tension generated by the appearance of the Chinese annals. Throughout the rather vigorous polemic between Vossius and himself, Horn appeared to have been unmoved by the evidence of the Chinese annals. Almost seven years later, however, he published the Arca Noae, in which he attempted to reconcile ancient Chinese history with ancient Biblical history. He still accepted Archbishop Ussher’s Hebrew-text chronology, even to the point of asserting that “the earth was created on October 23, 4004 B.C.” By accepting the traditional date for the flood as well, he was compelled to identify it with the reign of Yao, the seventh sage emperor. From Martini’s Sinicae historiae Horn learned that large parts of China were submerged during Yao’s reign and that Yao’s successors, Shùn and Yù, became famous for

16 Isaac Vossius, Dissertatio de vera aetate mundi, qua ostenditur natale mundi tempus annis 1440 vulgarum anticipare (The Hague, 1659), 44–48.
17 Georg Horn, Dissertatio de vera aetate mundi, qua sententia illorum refellitur qui statuunt natale mundi tempus annis minimum 1440 vulgarem aeram anticipare (Leiden, 1659).
18 For this controversy see the following: Isaac Vossius, Castigationes ad scriptum Georgii Hornii de aetate mundi (The Hague, 1659); Georg Horn, Defensio dissertationis de vera aetate mundi, contra castigationes Isaaci Vossii . . . (Leiden, 1659); Isaac Vossius, Auctarium castigationem ad scriptum de aetate mundi (The Hague, 1659); Georg Horn, Auctarium defensionis pro vera aetate mundi (Leiden, 1659).
draining these waters and reclaiming the inundated land. Martini thought that these lands had been submerged since the floods of 3000 B.C. Horn, however, contended that the submerged land proved that there had been a flood during Yao's reign, and this flood he identified with the Biblical deluge. But if the universal flood of the Genesis account had occurred in Yao's reign, Horn still faced the problem of explaining how the Chinese were able to remember their antediluvian history. He saw two alternatives: either Chinese history before Yao was myth, or a record of antediluvian events had been preserved by occupants of Noah's ark. Horn was willing to consider the second alternative, but to do so meant that ancient Chinese history and ancient Hebrew history necessarily rested on the same tradition, since only Noah and his family survived the flood. Horn therefore suggested that the ancient Chinese annals were merely a distorted account of the history more clearly recorded in the first chapters of Genesis.

Horn demonstrated his thesis by identifying each of the sage emperors with one of the Old Testament patriarchs. Fu Hsi, he suggested, could have been Adam. The tradition that Fu Hsi had no mother but the earth, seemed convincingly similar to the description in Genesis of Adam's creation from the earth's dust. The second sage emperor, Shên Nung, would then be Cain. Horn thought their names were similar, and both were described as agriculturalists. Shên Nung's successor Huang-ti, the Yellow Emperor of Taoist legend, Horn identified with Cain's son Enoch. Just as Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying, so Huang-ti was suddenly whisked away to a mountain top and given instant immortality. And so Horn continued down through the ranks of Chinese culture heroes until he came to Yao, who he thought was obviously Noah. Not only had the flood occurred during Yao's reign, but Martini had described him as a pious and holy man, terms eminently appropriate for Noah as well. Horn concluded, therefore, that Genesis and the Chinese annals were actually two records of the same history. The differences between them, he thought, could easily be explained by the effects of time on the memory of the Chinese. Far from challenging ancient Biblical history, therefore, the Chinese annals actually helped verify the Hebrew scriptures and the traditional chronologies derived from them.

Horn's attempt to identify sage emperors with Old Testament patriarchs was repeated with variations by many writers during the following century. In 1669, for example, the English scholar John Webb wrote an essay exploring the possibility that Chinese was the primitive language of mankind—the language spoken by Noah and all men before the confusion of tongues at Babel. Accepting Horn's identification of Noah and Yao, but not his other identifications, Webb reasoned that China was settled by Noah and some
of his children soon after the flood and before the confusion of tongues at Babel. (In fact Webb thought Noah had lived in China even before the flood and had built the ark there.) Consequently, if all men spoke one language before the confusion of languages at Babel, and if the modern Chinese still spoke the language of their empire's founders, then Chinese was the original language of all mankind. Webb supported his thesis by describing many characteristics of the Chinese language that he thought betrayed its primitive nature.23

Webb also rejected the theory, advanced by the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher, that China had been settled by Egyptians. Kircher suggested this because of what he thought were similarities between Chinese characters and Egyptian hieroglyphs.24 Webb saw little similarity between the languages, but he objected to the theory on other grounds as well. It was generally believed, he pointed out, that the Egyptians had descended from Ham, Noah's second son, whose descendants were cursed by Noah and supposedly became idolators. Jesuit missionaries, however, reported that the ancient Chinese had never worshipped idols but had served the one true God. Webb concluded, therefore, that the Chinese could not have descended from the idolatrous race of Ham, but that China must have been settled by Noah himself or by his oldest son, Shem.25

During the last decades of the seventeenth century the Jesuit policy of cultural accommodation in China—particularly their accommodation of certain Confucian rites and ceremonies—received increasingly severe criticism from the order's Franciscan and Dominican rivals; the ensuing quarrel became known as the Rites Controversy. Many aspects of the Jesuit image of China and its history were questioned as well. For example, when the Dominican missionary Domingo Navarrete wrote his description of China in 1676, he frankly acknowledged that one of his aims was to refute Jesuit notions about primitive Chinese religion and to demonstrate that the ancient Chinese had no knowledge of God. He was convinced that the Chinese could not have descended directly from Noah or from Shem. But Navarrete retained a high respect for Chinese antiquity, despite his anti-Jesuit bias. He accepted Fu Hsi as the first authentic Chinese emperor and Martini's date, 2957 B.C., as the first year of his reign. He then identified Fu Hsi with Noah's son Ham, using a Septuagint-based chronology to correlate their dates. Finally, as if to divorce the ancient Chinese completely from the true religion, he identified Fu Hsi-Ham with the Persian Zoroaster.26

The Jesuit missionaries, too, occasionally tried their hands at identifying Chinese emperors with Hebrew patriarchs. As might be expected, they usually based their chronological computations on the Septuagint version, and they tended to identify the earliest sage emperors with either Noah or his descendants in the line of Shem. The Rites Controversy apparently made them a bit more cautious than Martini had been. Father Philip Couplet, for example, admitted in his remarks about Chinese chronology appended to the Jesuit translation of the Confucian classics known as the Four Books that the traditional accounts of Fu Hsi and his successors contained material that was obviously mythological. Couplet did not think the fabulous aspects of the story were sufficient reason for rejecting the annals or for doubting the existence of the sage emperors; one might as well question the existence of Saturn, Jupiter, Hercules, Bacchus, or Romulus. Nevertheless Couplet began his chronological tables with Huang-ti rather than Fu Hsi. His translator colleagues, however, thought Fu Hsi was an authentic Chinese emperor. In the preface to their translation of the Four Books they described Fu Hsi as a descendant of Shem, who settled in China soon after the confusion of languages at Babel. But the Jesuit translators professed sympathy with those who could not accept the Septuagint and admitted that the myths embedded in the history of the first six emperors raised some doubts about the authenticity of the account. They concluded that if it could be demonstrated that a chronology based on the Masoretes were indisputably true, they would happily accept Yao as the first emperor. Following a Hebrew-text chronology, Yao could have been established in China shortly after the incident at the Tower of Babel. In either case China was populated soon after the flood. The dates of Yao and his successors, Couplet and his colleagues asserted, were as firmly established as were those of the Greek Olympiads.

Even the clearly fabulous aspects of the Chinese annals could provide opportunities for correlating ancient Chinese history with the Old Testament. For example, Christian Mentzel, the physician and Chinese-language scholar who translated a Chinese history schoolbook into German, thought he saw misty fragments of the Biblical stories of the Creation and the Fall in the legends surrounding Fu Hsi and his sister Nu Kua. Mentzel identified


28 “Proemalis declaratio,” ibid., lxxiv–lxxv.

29 “Etenim annorum computus saltem ille qui ab Yao Rege usque ad haec tempora decurrit, adeo ordinatus, & tanta consensu scriptorum omnium exactus ad suas periodos seu cyclos sexaginta annorum, ut non magis dubitari queat de illius integritate, quam de Graecorum per olympiadas suas supputatione, cui tantum fidei & autoritatis tribuitur.” Ibid., lxxv.
Fu Hsi with Adam, Nu Kua with Eve. The story of Fu Hsi’s birth resembled Adam’s creation. Furthermore, Fu Hsi was supposed to have had the body of a snake, and the second character of Nu Kua’s name could mean one having a wound from the bite of a tree or the fruit of a tree. Mentzel thought all this looked like distorted remnants of the Genesis account of Adam’s fall.03

Efforts to correlate the ancient Chinese annals with the Hebrew Old Testament still engrossed the English historian Samuel Shuckford in 1728. He thought the ancient Chinese descriptions of Fu Hsi more closely resembled the Genesis description of Noah than that of Adam. Beyond this he accepted Webb’s theory that Noah traveled eastward after leaving the ark, eventually settling in China, and that consequently the Chinese were not at the Tower of Babel when the languages were confused. Shuckford accepted Ussher’s Hebrew-text chronology and correlated it with the Chinese annals by demonstrating that the various estimates for the beginning of Fu Hsi’s reign all fell within Ussher’s dates for Noah’s life—2948 to 2016 B.C. The only error in the Chinese chronologies then, according to Shuckford, was that they recorded all the events of Fu Hsi-Noah’s life as if they had occurred when he was emperor of China, while in fact he was emperor only during the last 115 years of his suspiciously long life.31

Martini’s account of how the sun stood still for ten days during Yao’s reign provided Shuckford still another opportunity to correlate the Chinese annals with Genesis. Following the chronological calculations that resulted from his identification of Noah and Fu Hsi, Shuckford found that the Biblical story of the sun standing still for Joshua probably occurred in the seventy-fifth year of Yao’s reign. But in the Old Testament story the sun stood still for several hours, not for ten days. Shuckford, however, was not easily discouraged. He suspected that European translators were wrong about the Chinese character they had translated as day. If the character were translated as hour, Shuckford observed, the Chinese records and the Old Testament story coincided almost exactly.32

The game of identifying sage emperors with patriarchs continued through the eighteenth century. Serious scholars as well as popularizers played it. The German Sinologist Gottlieb Bayer, for example, equated Fu Hsi with Adam, Shên Nung with Adam’s son Seth, and Huang-ti with Noah.33 To do this he had to accept as authentic several emperors between Shên Nung and Huang-ti whose existence most European scholars either questioned or rele-

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32 Ibid., 3: 462–63. See also Martini, Sinicae historiae, 97.
33 Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer, Museum sinicum in quo sinicae linguae et litteraturae ratio explicatur (St. Petersburg, 1750), 2: 289.
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gated to subordinate provincial roles. Bayer found an Old Testament equivalent for each of them. Etienne Fourmant, the French orientalist and royal librarian, searched the obviously mythological dynasties before Fu Hsi for possible correlations. He discovered that the characters used in the name of the legendary creator, P'an-ku, could be understood to mean something like "saved from the waters by the ark," and thus might refer to Noah or, more probably, to his son Japheth. A former Jesuit abbé, Claude Lambert, questioned the authenticity of all the emperors before Yao. Even Chinese scholars, he thought, had too many reservations about them. He was convinced that Chinese history began with Yao, whom he identified with Joktan, the younger brother of Peleg and son of Eber, one of Shem's descendants. Lambert thought Yao-tang, another form of Yao's name, strongly resembled Joktan, and he appears to have been convinced by reading Genesis 10:30 regarding Joktan: "And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar, a mount of the East." As late as 1775 the English classical scholar and bibliophile, Jacob Bryant, was still making such identifications. Bryant thought that the Chinese, like the Egyptians, had borrowed their ancient history from other, older peoples. What the Chinese thought to be the record of their ancient past was merely a shadowy memory of the events recorded in Genesis. He identified Fu Hsi with Adam, Shen Nung with Noah, and Huang-ti with Noah's son Ham, whom he also identified with the Egyptian Serapis.

There seems to have been no limit to the variety of these correlations and identifications. Writers who knew little or no Chinese—and often no Hebrew—could always see the sage emperors' names as corruptions of the original Hebrew. Besides, the deeds of the Chinese culture heroes—the discovery of fire, the invention of letters, the institution of marriage, or the invention of agriculture—were described vaguely enough in the Chinese annals to be reminiscent of the accomplishments of the Mosaic patriarchs. We may be tempted to smile a bit at the somewhat curious efforts of these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholars, especially when we realize that they were trying to correlate the Biblical and classical tradition with Chinese legend rather than with history. Still, attempts to identify Chinese culture heroes with Hebrew patriarchs were part of a serious and significant endeavor—Europe's first attempt to bring China into world history.

37 For additional French examples of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dispute over the Chinese annals and the attempts to correlate them with Old Testament chronology, see Vergile Pinot, La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France, 1640–1740 (Paris, 1932), 189–279.
Isaac Vossius, the first European scholar to have accepted enthusiastically Martini's description of ancient Chinese history, made no attempt to identify sage emperors with patriarchs. To him the apparent conflict between the two chronologies could be easily resolved if the Septuagint version were used as the basis for Old Testament chronology or if the Genesis flood were not assumed to be universal. Vossius accepted both possibilities, and he consequently did not need to identify patriarchs with sage emperors in order to reconcile Biblical and Chinese accounts. The acceptance of a Septuagint-derived chronology became increasingly common among those who wrote about China during the century and a half after Vossius. Jesuit missionaries not only used it in China, but after 1658 most of them used it for accounts published in Europe as well.  

All the traditional arguments for and against the Septuagint continued to be used after 1658. At times the debate became somewhat heated. Paul Pezron, the Benedictine chronologist at St. Maur, accused first-century Jewish scholars of deliberately shortening the chronology of the patriarchs in order to prove that the Messiah had not yet come. According to Pezron, these Jewish scholars divided the earth's predicted six-thousand-year history (a parallel with the six days of creation) into three, two-thousand-year periods: the years before Moses' law, the years between the annunciation of the law and the advent of the Messiah, and the years after the Messiah. Since those who perpetrated the forgery destroyed all earlier texts, the Septuagint translators in the third century B.C. must have used older and more accurate Hebrew texts than those available to St. Jerome and subsequent Christians. But while traditional arguments in favor of the Septuagint continued to be used, a growing number of scholars insisted that the Septuagint chronologies must be accepted in order to accommodate ancient Chinese history.

As Vossius had demonstrated, there were no serious chronological problems in reconciling Chinese history since Fu Hsi (2952 B.C.) with ancient Hebrew history if a Septuagint-based chronology were used; this placed the flood as early as 3617 B.C. Disputes might rage over which of Noah's children fathered the Chinese or whether China was settled before or after the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, but those who followed the Septuagint were, at least, not compelled by their chronology to accept one position or another. The issues had to be debated on other grounds—the nature of the Chinese language, for instance, or of antique Chinese religion. Nor

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38 In addition to the works of Couplet and Gaubil cited above, see Jean Baptiste du Halde, Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise . . . (Paris, 1735), and Giovanni Battista Riccioli, Chronologiae reformatae et ad certas conclusiones redactae tomus primus continens doctrinam temporum . . . (Bologna, 1669).


40 Pezron, L'Antiquité, 35.

41 See especially Riccioli, Chronologiae reformatae, 221–22, 248; and Pezron, L'Antiquité, 248–49.
Europe’s “Discovery” of China

were they forced to identify sage emperors with Hebrew patriarchs. In fact Navarrete was able to use a Septuagint-based chronology to prove that Fu Hsi could not have been Adam.\(^42\) Acceptance of the Septuagint version as the basis for ancient chronology consequently enabled many scholars to evaluate and criticize the Chinese annals without the distorting concern for chronological reconciliation.

Criticism of the Chinese annals increased appreciably during the last decades of the seventeenth century. The motivation of the critics varied: some doggedly defended the traditional view of ancient history and chronology; others were primarily motivated by their opposition to the Jesuits and their China mission.\(^43\) Much of the criticism, however, resulted from the increasing volume and sophistication of the information about ancient Chinese history available to Europeans. In the 1670s, for example, the English jurist Matthew Hale could still write:

As touching the Chinese and their long derived Annals, there is so much spoken by report or relation, but nothing authentik thereof is extant to the common view but some ingenious yet uncertain Collections out of Martinius by Mr. Webb in his Essay touching the Primitive Language; Vossius, and some others: And therefore I should spare anything touching them.\(^44\)

This could not accurately have been said a century later; by then much more and much better information about ancient Chinese history was available to European readers. Large sections of Martini's *Sinicae historiae* had been translated and included in more popular works.\(^45\) Much historical information, as well as discussions of the historical problems, was included in the *Lettres édifiantes*, a voluminous series of the letters of Jesuit missionaries that Father Jean du Halde began publishing in 1702.\(^46\) Several new general descriptions of China had been published, the most important of which were Navarrete's in 1676, Louis le Comte's in 1696, and du Halde's in 1735.\(^47\)

\(^42\) Navarrete, *Account of the Empire of China*, 3.


\(^45\) For example, see Johann Nieuhof, *Het gesantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoord keizer van China . . . sedert den jaaren 1655 tot 1657 . . . Benefess een nauweurige beschrijving der Sineesche steden, dorpen, regeruing, wetenschappen, hantwerken, zeden enz* (Amsterdam, 1665); and Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsch Oost-Indische Maetschappye op de kust en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina: . . . Benefess een beschrijving van geheel Sina* (Amsterdam, 1670). Nieuhof's book was first translated into English in 1669; Dapper's in 1671.


\(^47\) Domingo Fernandez Navarrete, *Tratados historicos, politicos, ethicos y religiosos de la monarchia de China: descripcion breve de aquel imperio . . . con narracion . . . de varios sucessos, y cosas singulares de otros reynos, y diferentes navegaciones . . .* (Madrid, 1676); Louis Daniel le Comte, *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (Paris, 1696); du Halde, *Description géographique*. 
All these contain significant sections devoted to ancient Chinese history. Du Halde's great *Description géographique*, for example, contains over two hundred pages on Chinese history, more than half of which deal with the earliest, pre-Shang, period; it contains some discussion of the sources for ancient Chinese history as well. Some of the sources themselves were translated into European languages. The Jesuit translation of three of the Four Books was published in 1687. Mentzel's translation and commentary on a book called *Hsiao erh lun* (Discourse with a Child) appeared in 1696. The *Ch'iün ch'iu* (Spring and Autumn Annals) was translated in 1750 but never published. Finally in 1770 a translation of the *Shu ching*, or Classic of History, appeared, and in 1777 the Jesuit Joseph de Mailla published the first volume of his translation of the thirteenth-century philosopher Chu Hsi's voluminous history of China. Perhaps even more important than the translation of Chinese texts into European languages were the careful analyses of ancient Chinese history and sources made by Fourmant and by the Jesuit missionary Antoine Gaubil.

The new information about China and Chinese history touched off a wave of popular interest in China during the eighteenth century. Not only did it feed the fires of the Rites Controversy, but Voltaire and the *philosophes* used the descriptions of Chinese society, politics, religion, and philosophy to criticize European institutions and customs. European religious strife and intolerance were contrasted with China's humane toleration of religious variety. The role of the hereditary aristocracy in European governments and society was contrasted with the aristocracy of learning selected by state examinations, which governed China. An idealized view of Chinese ethics and public morality was used to discredit the assumption that Christianity was indispensable for public morality. And, of course, the ancient historical annals were used to discredit the Old Testament. The *chinoiseries* of eigh-

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49 Confucius sinarum philosophus.
50 Mentzel, *Kurtse chinesische chronologia*.
51 "Tchun tseiou, le printemps & l'automne, au annales de la principauté de Loù, depuis 722 jusqu'en 481 avant l'ere chrétienne, . . . Ecrites par le celebre philosophe Confucius l'an 480 avant Jésus-Christ après qu'il se fut demis de la charge de Ministre d'Etat qu'il possedoit a la cour de Loù . . . et traduites en français par la Roux Deshauterayes, 1750," MS Francais 14686, Bibliothèque Nationale.
52 Antoine Gaubil, tr., *Le Chou-king, un des livres sacrés des Chinois, qui renferme les fondements de leur ancienne histoire, les principes de leur gouvernement & de leur morale; ouvrage recueilli par Confucius . . .* (Paris, 1770).
55 The secondary literature on China and the Enlightenment is fairly large—too large to cite more than a few examples here. In addition to the works of Pinot, Guy, and Rowbotham cited above, the reader might see Henri Cordier, *La Chine en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1910); Walter Engemann, *Voltaire und China* (Leipzig, 1932); Basil Guy, "Rousseau and China," *Revue
teenth-century decorative arts, literature, architecture, and gardening were all part and product of this greatly expanded knowledge of and interest in China. Whether motivated by the issues of the Rites Controversy, the campaigns of the philosophes, or by a disinterested concern for historical accuracy, European scholars were building an increasingly broader base from which to evaluate China's past.

One of the difficulties encountered by European scholars in accepting Martini's account of Chinese antiquity was the paucity of references to China in the other antique literature with which Europeans were familiar. The English historian Bishop Burnet, for example, sarcastically professed amazement that so ancient, powerful, and learned an empire as the China described by Martini had left no traces in the literature of other ancient peoples:

And it appears from the Credit of their Relations, and the monuments of the Place itself that this Empire has continued from a very remote Antiquity, and flourished exceedingly in Arts and Learning; and that without any Correspondence with Learned Nations, or receiving from them, for aught we can find, either Colonies, or the Founders of their Nation; as if they were of a different Original from the rest of Mankind, and the Posterity of Noah; but were self-descended and self-taught.

Many Europeans, like the Scottish theologian Robert Baillie, saw no reason why Chinese accounts should be judged more accurate than the fables of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks, or Romans. Those who accepted the Chinese annals, however, often contended that it was precisely the absence of miraculous and outlandish events that made the ancient Chinese records so credible. This, they often observed, was in marked contrast to the earliest records of any other ancient people. Few writers before Voltaire, apparently,
objected to the century-long reigns of the sage emperors; because they were thought to be either identical with or contemporary to the Old Testament patriarchs, traditional Christians were not surprised by their longevity.60 Those who would have gladly attacked the authority of the Old Testament found in the Chinese annals so useful a weapon that they were loath to criticize such details as a sage emperor’s life span. But there were some miraculous and outlandish accounts in the Chinese histories: Fu Hsi’s serpentine body, for example; Shên Nung’s ox-like head; and the immediate immortality Huang-ti was supposed to have received on a mountain top. Some critics ridiculed the mythical aspects of ancient Chinese history and questioned the existence of the sage emperors.61 Others treated the stories of Fu Hsi, Shên Nung, and Huang-ti as they had treated Greek fables—as distortions and additions to an essentially factual story.62 Fabulous though such stories were, they still seemed restrained compared with Greek, Roman, or Egyptian myths.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of China’s ancient history was the occasional inclusion of astronomical observations in the record. As Pezron observed in 1687, the Chinese from the very earliest times appear to have fixed important dates by astronomical observations as well as by the sixty-year cycle. In 2513 B.C., during the reign of the sage emperor Chuan Hsü, Chinese historians recorded a conjunction of the five planets on the same day in which the sun and the moon were in conjunction.63 To Voltaire in 1765 this was still a convincing argument for the authenticity of the Chinese histories:

If any annals bear a character of certitude they are those of the Chinese, which have joined, as has already been said elsewhere, the history of the heavens with that of the earth. Alone of all the peoples, they have constantly marked their eras by eclipses, by conjunctions of planets; and our astronomers who have examined their calculations, have been astonished to find them almost all true. The other nations invented their allegorical fables and the Chinese wrote their history, pen and astrolabe in hand, with a simplicity of which there is found no example in the rest of Asia.64

60 For example, see Pezron, L’Antiquité, 246: “Fohi [Fu Hsi] n*quit du tems des Patriarches, ayant été contemporain d’Heber, de Phaleg, & de Rehu tris-ayeul d’Abraham, & alors les hommes vivoient encore deux, trois, & quatre siècles, ainsi qu’on le voit par l’Histoire Sainte. De-l vient qu’il a régné si long-tems, c’est-à-dire, 115 ans, comme les Chinois en tombent d’accord, parce que la durée de sa vie a approché de celle des Patriarches.”

61 For example, see Antoine Yves Goguet, The Origin of Laws, Arts, and Sciences and their Progress among the Most Ancient Nations (Edinburgh, 1761), 3: 301-25; Jean Fouquet, Tabula chronologica historia sinicae connexa cum cyclo qui vulgo Kia tse dicitur (Rome, 1730); or “An Explanation of the New Chronological Table of the Chinese History, translated into Latin from the Original Chinese, by Father Johannes Franciscus Fouquet, Soc. Jes. Bishop of Eleutheropolis and published at Rome in the Year 1730,” Philosophical Transactions, 36 (1729-30): 397-424.

62 “Quae omnia tametsi etiam Sinae, ut dixi, respuant uti falsa, negarc tamen non possimus Europaeo homini studiosius singula consideranti, nescio quid rursus priscus veritatis inter fabulas istas, ceu densas inter tenebras, pauxillum tenuissimae lucis intermicare: quod eò fidentiuis afirmo, quod omnes ferè fabulae ortum suum habecant ex eo quod fabulosum non cst.” Couplet, “Praefatio ad tabulam chronologicam,” Confucius sinarum philosophus, iv. See also Bryant, New System, 4: 264-67.

63 Pezron, L’Antiquité, 245, 253; Martini, Sinicae historiae, 33.

64 François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, Essai sur les moeurs et l’esprit des nations, et sur les
Long before Voltaire wrote, however, other European scholars began to question the accuracy and authenticity of the astronomical observations recorded in the ancient Chinese histories. Eclipses and conjunctions of planets could be verified mathematically. The astronomer Jean Cassini, for example, calculated backward to verify several of the observations recorded in the Chinese annals and concluded that most of them could not have been observed at the time or from the place stated. The celebrated conjunction of five planets in Chuan Hsi's reign, Cassini concluded, could not have occurred in 2513 B.C., but rather in 2012 B.C., five centuries later.65

Isaac Jaquelot, Pierre Bayle's theologian-antagonist, also had scant respect for Chinese astronomy. If the ancient Chinese were such sophisticated astronomers, he asked, why did they construct their sixty-year cycle without reference to any celestial movement? And how was it possible, almost two centuries after the calendar was supposed to have been regulated, for two famous astronomers to have been executed for failing to predict an eclipse? Jaquelot concluded that astronomy was but imperfectly developed in ancient China, and he suspected that the ancient astronomical observations, together with most of China's earliest history, were probably borrowed from the Near Eastern peoples.66 The Jesuit Louis le Comte agreed that the Chinese knew too little astronomy and mathematics to calculate eclipses and conjunctions of ancient times. This, he contended, proved that the phenomena had been observed and recorded at the time they occurred and were not interpolated later into the record.67

Du Halde, who admired the Chinese, also distrusted the ancient astronomical observations. The Chinese, he pointed out, believed celestial phenomena like eclipses and conjunctions of planets were omens or portents. Court astronomers, therefore, had every incentive for fabricating good omens, like planetary conjunctions, and ignoring bad ones. As an example he described how a conjunction of four planets in 1724 was reported to the Yung-chung emperor as a conjunction of five planets:

The emperor seem'd pleased with it, and received the Compliments of the Court on this Occasion; every Body gain'd by it, especially the Mathematicians, who did not err through ignorance.

This false Conjunction, which was carefully chronicled, may be the Occasion of great Disputes and false Systems in future Times; if two or three thousand years hence an European should calculate this Conjunction, he would not find Saturn in it.68

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66 [Isaac Jaquelot.] Dissertations sur l'existence de Dieu, où l'on demontre cette verité par l'histoire universelle de la premier antiquité du monde . . . (The Hague, 1697), 263, 265.
67 Le Comte, Nouveaux mémoires, 1: 207.
Du Halde thought such fabrications detracted little from the accuracy of the ancient Chinese histories. Chinese scholars, at least, understood such things as common—probably necessary—pieces of court flattery and knew how to correct such a report. "Should this make us doubt other facts of Yong Tching's [Yung-chung's] History, it would be no difficulty to the Chinese, who perfectly understand this common piece of flattery and know what to abate of these Compliments to the Emperor on such occasions."69

The English theologian George Costard rehearsed most of the critical scholars' case against the Chinese astronomical observations in a letter printed in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London in 1747.70 Chinese reporting was imprecise at best, contended Costard. They recorded only the day of a planetary conjunction, never the hour or position in the sky. The reporting was highly sporadic as well. For example, the first reported eclipse of the sun was recorded by the Chinese in 2155 B.C.; the next recorded eclipse did not occur until 776 B.C.—after an interval of 1,379 years. Furthermore, asked Costard, how could the ancient Chinese have been such sophisticated astronomers when their modern descendants seemed ignorant of many basic astronomical truths? They had only recently mastered the mathematics necessary to calculate planetary orbits. The avid interest shown by Chinese scholars in Jesuit astronomy and mathematics further testified to the primitive state of Chinese astronomy. Costard suspected that, in fact, the Chinese had no conception of regular natural laws governing the movements of stars and planets. Their superstitious attitude toward eclipses belied a belief in natural law. Costard was able to cite an eighth-century Chinese astronomer who explicitly argued against regular celestial movements:

_The English theologian George Costard rehearsed most of the critical scholars' case against the Chinese astronomical observations in a letter printed in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London in 1747._

_Y-hang, about the Year after Christ 721, had the Reputation among them of an able Astronomer; but being mistaken, it seems, in his Calculation of an Eclipse, rather than own his Ignorance, he pretended, that the heavenly Bodies did not always observe the same Laws. In Support of which extraordinary Hypothesis, he urged, that, in the Time of Tsin, the Star Sirius was eclipsed by the Planet Venus; tho' the Latitude of Sirius is 39° 32' 8", and that of Venus never exceeds 4°._71

Chinese historians also reported that books about astronomy were among those burned during the first Ch'in emperor's literary purge in 213 B.C. Costard doubted that very much had been lost.72

As it became apparent that the astronomical observations recorded in the Chinese annals were not incontestably accurate, the controversy was focused increasingly on whether or not inaccuracies in ancient Chinese astronomy

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69 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 480. See also pp. 480–83.
72 Ibid., 484.
seriously descredited Chinese historical records. To the militantly anti-Jesuit orientalist Abbé Eusèbe Renaudot, for example, discrediting Chinese astronomy simply provided more evidence against the supposed antiquity of arts and sciences in China. In 1718 he published a translation of two ninth-century Arab descriptions of China in an attempt to demonstrate that the arts, sciences, and philosophy of ninth-century China were those of a primitive people. Renaudot’s Arabs spoke condescendingly about the primitive state of Chinese philosophy and science and were amused by the emperor’s naive questions. If the Chinese had progressed so little by the ninth century, Renaudot reasoned, China could not be as old as the Jesuits claimed, and her ancient annals need not be regarded as challenges to the Old Testament. Later in the century both the French jurist Antoine Goguet and the Encyclopedist Nicolas Boulanger thought the problems raised by Cassini and Costard discredited most Chinese history before the third century B.C.

On the other hand, Lambert, writing specifically against Renaudot, contended that Chinese astronomers clearly accomplished the practical tasks they had set out to perform—the regulation of the calendar for agricultural purposes, for example. They really had no interest in Jupiter’s satellites or Saturn’s rings, and they had no telescopes. Lambert explained the failure of the Chinese to develop a sophisticated mathematics or astronomy by observing that such studies were simply not the way to wealth and prominence in China. The best minds studied history, literature, and moral philosophy in order to pass the government-sponsored examinations. But Lambert considered the astronomical observations found in the Chinese annals to be of incontestable antiquity, despite occasional inaccuracies in recording. The English theologian John Jackson admitted that many of the astronomical observations were seriously inaccurate, but contended that the authenticity of the ancient annals in no way depended on the accuracy of the observations.

As early as 1659 Martin Shook had wondered how reliable the Chinese annals could be if, as Martini had related, most of the ancient historical and philosophical books had been burned by the first Ch’in emperor in 213 B.C. Critics of the Chinese annals from that time forward pointed to the difficul-

73 Eusèbe Renaudot, Anciennes relations des Indes et de la Chine, de deux voyageurs mohamétans, qui y allèrent dans le neuvième siècle (traduites d’arabe) (Paris, 1718). See especially the long appendix: “Éclaircissements touchant le prédiction de la religion chrétienne à la Chine; touchant l’entrée des mohamétans dans la Chine (qu’il place à l’an 780); touchant les Juifs qui ont été trouvés à la Chine; sur les sciences des Chinois.”

74 Goguet, Origin of Laws, 3: 284–86; [Nicolas Antoine] Boulanger, L’Antiquité dévoilée par ses usages ou examen critique des principales opinions, cérémonies & institutions religieuses & politiques des différents peuples de la terre (Amsterdam, 1766), 201–03.


76 Jackson, Chronological Antiquities, 2: 440.

ties involved in obtaining reliable information about anything preceding the Ch'in dynasty.\textsuperscript{78} Lambert, like other enthusiasts for Chinese antiquities, discounted the seriousness of the book burning, asserting that Chinese zeal for scholarship and reverence for history resulted in the preservation of most of the proscribed literature.\textsuperscript{79} Goguet, however, observed that the old historical and philosophical texts were not recovered until 150 years after Ch'in Shih Huang-ti's purge. How, he asked, could the restored texts be free from lacunae, garbled passages, interpolations, or outright forgeries?\textsuperscript{80}

By the mid-eighteenth century Europeans had ample evidence for Goguet's suspicions. It was known by then that Chinese historians disagreed with each other as to who was the first Chinese emperor. Fu Hsi, Huang-ti, and Yao each had his partisans, while some writers described dynasties of emperors reigning thousands of years before Fu Hsi. In addition to some obviously mythological passages, the ancient histories contained many internal contradictions. Important inventions or cultural innovations were sometimes attributed to two or more ancient emperors who lived centuries apart. In an appendix to Goguet's book, Michele le Roux Deshauterayes, an orientalist and professor at the Collège de France, emphasized these contradictions. He also correctly suspected that many of the sage emperors were later Taoist creations.\textsuperscript{81}

Those eighteenth-century scholars who were linguistically best qualified to criticize the Chinese annals generally remained impressed by their accuracy and authenticity. Fourmant, for example, admitted that large parts of China's early history—perhaps everything before Yao—should, like the ancient Greek epics and fables, be taken to contain a substratum of truth embellished by myth. On the other hand, he pointed out that China's ancient history had not been gleaned from a few scattered texts but was part of a continuous, uninterrupted corpus of historical works spanning twenty-two dynasties in 150 volumes. Furthermore, these dynastic histories were so detailed that the text often read more like a journal than a history, and Chinese historians were always careful to keep the narrative of events separate from their commentary on the events. Fourmant also described the elaborate process still followed in Peking for recording the actions of the emperor and other court affairs.\textsuperscript{82}

Perhaps the most thorough and sophisticated criticism of the sources for ancient Chinese history produced during the eighteenth century was Gaubil’s. He recognized the problems attending the recovery of the ancient texts but also observed that Shih Huang-ti had not destroyed all historical docu-

\textsuperscript{78} For example, see Pezon, L'Antiquité, 265; Burnet, Doctrina antiqua, 18–19; and Goguet, Origin of Laws, 3: 284–85.
\textsuperscript{79} Lambert, Histoire générale, 10: 118–19.
\textsuperscript{80} Goguet, Origin of Laws, 3: 284–85.
ments. The Ch’in family history, for example, had been preserved, and it purported to trace the dynasty back to the days of the sage emperor Shih. Nor was the I ching or Book of Changes destroyed. Gaubil apparently accepted the appendixes or “Wings” of the I ching, which contain some historical material, as having been written by Confucius long before the Ch’in dynasty. He then listed the extant sources for China’s ancient history—the classics as well as the historians—and analyzed each text in terms of its chronological relationship to the events described, the way in which it was recovered after the Ch’in, the accuracy of the astronomical observations contained in it, and the parallels or contradictions between it and other sources. Gaubil accepted Huang-ti as the first Chinese emperor. He thought Confucius and Mencius had failed to mention any emperors before Yao because China had probably not been civilized, or at least not well governed, before Yao’s time. Fu Hsi and Shên Nung Gaubil considered princes or chiefs of the Chinese people during their long migration from Mesopotamia.

The controversies continued during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Jesuits and their antagonists continued to battle over Chinese rites and ceremonies. Scholars and missionaries continued to debate the merits of ancient Chinese chronology and history. Both feeding the controversies and resulting from them was a growing body of information about China’s ancient past that was being analyzed with increasing sophistication. For some scholars, like Nicolas Fréret, the secretary of the Royal Academy, Chinese history appears to have become, in fact, a self-justifying study, quite apart from any concern for reconciling it with the Bible or the general history of mankind. Although they disagreed on the authenticity of the ancient records, by the mid-eighteenth century scholars like Fourmant, Gaubil, and Goguet knew the major sources and historians of ancient China and their supposed dates; they were also aware of the problems involved in using these sources.

Despite the growing concern among European scholars between the times of Martini and Voltaire for the problems and implications of Chinese history, and despite the growing body of information about Chinese history available to them, it was apparently still possible for some European writers of universal history totally to ignore China and its challenge to traditional world history. Bishop Bossuet’s famous Discours sur l’histoire universelle, for example, published more than two decades after Martini’s Sinicae historiae, contains not a word about the Chinese, Japanese, or Indians. While Bossuet modified the traditional sacred-profane division and the four-monarchies pattern, his purpose and scope of inquiry was no broader than that of Sleidanus or Gottfried: “a sermon with an historical text,” Eduard Feuter called

84 See Pinot, La Chine, 249–77.
Much the same can be said about the universal histories written by Antonio Foresti, Andraes Imhof, Nicolas Guedeville, and Gaspard Guillard de Beaurieu.

Some historians appear to have been reluctant to include ancient China in their universal histories because of the controversies about the Chinese annals. The Danish writer Ludwig von Holberg, for example, thought it would be soon enough to consider Chinese history when the problems regarding the authenticity of the annals were resolved. Others, like the Abbé Lenglet du Fresnoys, apparently saw no compelling reasons for broadening the scope of universal history to include China. He writes:

Even though the history of that empire [China] were as certain as some would have it be understood, it is nevertheless a study of mere curiosity which does not contain much profit, because these peoples have never had much connection with any of those whose history is useful or necessary to us.

Increasingly, however, European writers felt obliged to make room for China in their universal histories. Probably fewer than half of the universal histories written during the last half of the seventeenth century included China, but the great majority of eighteenth-century universal histories did so. Some, as we have seen, found the identification of sage emperors with Hebrew patriarchs to be the best way of bringing China into ancient world history. Shuckford’s identification of Fu Hsi with Noah, for example, made China the earliest established empire in his history. Some historians who declined to identify sage emperors and patriarchs still accepted China as the first empire founded after the flood. Both Johan Hase and Etienne Philippe de Prétot, whose universal histories for the most part follow the traditional pattern, made China, rather than Assyria or Babylon, the first empire. Even writers like the Benedictine scholar Augustin Calmet, who rejected the ancient Chinese chronology and distrusted the annals, included a long, Jesuit-style description of China in his universal history.

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85 Eduard Feuter, Geschichte der neuern Historiographie . . . (Munich and Berlin, 1925), 226.
86 Antonio Foresti, Mappamondo istorico, cioè ordinata narrazione dei quattro fommi imperii del mondo e della monarchia di Cristo da S. Pietro primo papa sino a' nostri tempi (Parma, 1690); Andreas Imhof, Neu-eröffneten Bilder-Saal (Nuremberg, 1692); Nicolas Guedeville, Le grand théatre historique (Leiden, 1703); and Gaspard Guillard de Beaurieu, Cours d'histoire sacrée et profane (3d ed.; Paris, 1766).
89 Shuckford, Sacred and Profane History, 1: 100–05.
90 Johann Matthias Hase, Historiae universalis politiae quantum ad eius partem i, ac ii, idea plane nova et legitima tracationem summorum imperiorum etc. (Nuremberg, 1743); [Etienne André Philippe de Prétot,] Analyse chronologique de l'histoire universelle, depuis le commencement du monde, jusqu'à l'empire de Charlemagne inclusivement (2d ed.; Paris, 1756). First edition, Paris, 1753.
91 Augustin Calmet, Histoire universelle, sacrée et profane, depuis le commencement du monde jusqu'à nos jours (Strasbour, 1731–71), 1: 231–37.
The English scholars whose cooperative efforts produced the first volume of their monumental *Universal History* in 1736 also distrusted the ancient Chinese annals. They were familiar with almost all the relevant literature about China available when they wrote, and they rehearsed in detail the arguments for and against accepting the ancient Chinese histories. They concluded: "We must, therefore, observe a medium between the two extremes which at present divide almost the whole literary world; and allow that the most antient historical memoirs of the Chinese are not entirely void of truth, though in the main they scarce merit the attention of the learned."92 Nevertheless China received considerable attention from the learned authors of the *Universal History*. They conspicuously included Chinese cosmogony in the long section on ancient cosmogonies. They discussed the possible identification of Chinese sage emperors and Hebrew patriarchs and concluded that the Chinese had descended from Noah's son Japheth. They also examined Webb's thesis that Chinese was the world's original language, although they preferred to confer that dignity on Hebrew. Finally, they discussed extensively the problems of ancient Chinese history in the volume entitled *Additions*.93

These English historians were apparently somewhat uncomfortable with their low opinion of Chinese antiquity, for the general chronological tables found in the last volume of the second edition reveal a surprising change of mind. Here Fu Hsi is identified with Noah, who migrated to China immediately after the flood.94 The change appears to have been an afterthought. No re-evaluation of the Chinese annals was made in earlier volumes of the second edition, and there are no volume and page references for the Chinese events listed in the chronological tables as there are for all other events. An explanatory remark in the preface to the last volume indicates that the chronological concurrence of Joshua's long day and the stationary sun of Yao's reign precipitated the change:

To subjoin a short remark on a passage in the tables which requires a particular explanation: it occurs in the year after the flood 897, and relates to the probability there is that the miracle recorded in the sacred writings, of the sun's standing still at the command of Joshua, is also mentioned in the Chinese records. It is very true, that, as it stands there, it appeared visibly absurd and fabulous; for it is said, that it stood still for ten days; and the time when this happened is not at all determined, farther than that it was toward the latter end of the reign of the emperor Yao: but if, from this incredible and indeterminate relation, any truth can be struck out, it may be of great use in bringing to light the confused chronology of the Chinese; for that it is, in respect to very antient times, very confused, the Chinese themselves acknowledge; an endeavor to do this ought not be unacceptable. A phaenomenon so extraordinary, as the standing still of the sun, was very likely to be recorded in the annals of an in-

quisitive and observing nation; and as likely as anything, to be magnified, or mistaken, when those annals fell into confusion, as by the confession of the Chinese themselves, it is allowed they did; and that great changes have happened in their character: so that there is nothing forced or improbable in supposing, that what we now read ten days, was originally but ten watches; which will bring it pretty near the truth.95

Working back from Yao and Joshua to Fu Hsi and Noah, the English historians saw what Shuckford had seen earlier—that Fu Hsi could have been Noah. They had known and rejected Shuckford’s theory when they wrote the first edition of the Universal History. But they had used a Samaritan-text chronology for the first edition and were using Ussher’s Hebrew-text chronology for the second. The authors apparently did not consider their new insight important enough to change earlier volumes of the second edition, but perhaps even this late modification indicates how difficult it was for eighteenth-century historians to ignore the claims of the Chinese annals.

Some eighteenth-century writers gave China a very large place in their universal histories. For example, Lambert’s laudatory description of China and its history comprises almost two volumes of his Histoire générale.96 Voltaire devoted the first two chapters of his Essai sur les moeurs to China. He claimed that the Essai was a continuation of Bossuet’s Discours sur l’histoire universelle, which ended with Charlemagne, and he professed to have included the ancient history of the Chinese and other Asian peoples only because Bossuet had completely ignored them.97 Actually Voltaire’s enthusiasm for Chinese civilization would have insured the Chinese a prominent place in the Essai regardless of their treatment in Bossuet’s work. Voltaire used China and its history to ridicule the parochialism of Bossuet and other historians who limited universal history to Western culture and its origins. In a short piece entitled, “Conversation with a Chinese,” Voltaire put these words into the mouth of a Chinese to whom some European scholars had given a copy of Bossuet’s Histoire universelle:

“Ah!” said he, “how fortunate! I shall now see what is said of our great empire—of our nation, which has existed as a national body for more than fifty thousand years—of that succession of emperors who have governed us for so many ages. I shall now see what is thought of the religion of the men of letters—of that simple worship which we render to the Supreme Being. How pleasing to see what is said in Europe of our arts, many of which are more ancient amongst us than any European kingdom. . . .” “Alas!” said one of the learned men to him, “you are not even mentioned in that book; you are too inconsiderable; it is almost all about the first nation in the world—the only nation, the great Jewish people!”98

95 Ibid., 21: xiii–xiv.
97 Voltaire, Essai sur les moeurs, 16: 90–01.
The China of Voltaire's *Essai*, therefore, is the oldest, most civilized, best governed, and wisest nation on earth, a nation whose historical records are incontestably accurate.99

During the eighteenth century, references to China and her ancient history occasionally appeared even in school textbooks. The Huguenot Jean la Croze's *Chronological Abridgement of Universal History*, for example, is hardly *avant garde*. Using a catechistic format he taught the traditional divisions of history: sacred and profane, the epochs, and the four monarchies. He accepted Ussher's chronology and asserted the superiority of Genesis over all other sources for ancient history. Nevertheless, in a chapter devoted to the founding of ancient monarchies after the confusion of languages at Babel, he asked:

Q. What other empire flourished in this period?
A. The empire of China, which by a long succession of kings, has been preserved till the present day.

Q. Who was its founder?
A. He was called Fo hi. [Fu Hsi].100

Johann Kohler's *Orbis terrarum in nuce* is no less traditional than La Croze's work. He nevertheless introduced his students to the challenge of the Chinese annals and to the controversies surrounding them, although he advised them to trust Scripture wherever conflicts appeared.101

China figured largely in other examples of eighteenth-century Europe's expanding historical horizons. Fourmant's student and successor, Joseph de Guignes, for example, wrote a history of the steppe peoples, who had so often impinged on both Western and Chinese society.102 He did not pretend to be writing universal history; nevertheless, in some respects, he more nearly approached Voltaire's ideal than did most universal historians of his time. Based primarily on Chinese sources, Guignes' work was one of the first European histories to have lost the parochial, Western point of view. François-Marie de Marsey's history of modern non-European nations is another example of this new point of view.103 In twenty-four volumes Marsey, an

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100 Jean Cornand de la Croze, *A Chronological Abridgement of Universal History; to which is Added, an Abridged Chronology of the Most Remarkable Discoveries and Inventions Relative to the Arts and Sciences* (tr. of 7th ed.; London, 1800), 2. He died in 1705.
101 [Johann David Köhler], *Orbis terrarum in nuce, sive compendium historiae civilis chronologicum in sculptura memoriali. Die Welt in einer Nuss, oder kurzer Begriff der merckwürdigsten Welt-Geschichte in einer gedächtnis-hülflichen Bilder-Lust; ausgefertig durch Christoph Weigel* (Nuremberg, 1722), 19.
ex-Jesuit, tried to describe the geography, history, and civilization of the “modern” non-European peoples in the same way that Charles Rollin had described the ancient peoples.\footnote{Charles Rollin, *Histoire ancienne des Égyptiens, des Carthaginois, des Assyriens, des Babyloniens, des Mèdes, et des Perses, des Macédoniens, des Grecs* (Paris, 1730–38).} The entire work is devoted to the peoples of Asia and America; its first volume deals with China. Marsey’s work was no more intended to be a universal history than was Guignes’. Nevertheless, it provides additional evidence for the increasing concern among eighteenth-century European scholars to bring China and the rest of Asia into their view of world history.

This does not mean, of course, that eighteenth-century universal historians wrote successful general histories of mankind. Few were able to escape European parochialism in their evaluation of other cultures and in the relative emphasis given to European history in their universal histories. Despite his enthusiasm for Chinese history, even Voltaire devoted most of the *Essai* to European history. Furthermore, his Enlightenment-classicist standards and tastes formed the canon by which he freely judged other peoples and eras; as the Göttingen historian August von Schlözer put it, Voltaire still “spoke of Solomon’s temple as of St. Peter’s.”\footnote{August Ludwig von Schlözer, *Weltgeschichte nach ihren Haupttheilen im Auszug und Zusammenhange* (Göttingen, 1792), 1.}

The information about China included in most seventeenth- and eighteenth century universal histories was usually more descriptive than historical, and it was rarely integrated effectively with the rest of world history. Calmet, for example, merely inserted a few pages of Jesuit-style description into his first volume. Most of this material has nothing to do with ancient Chinese history; it describes China as seen by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuit missionaries and is, therefore, irrelevant to the ancient world Calmet was describing in this volume.\footnote{Calmet, *Histoire universelle*, 1: 231–37.} Writers who treated China’s ancient history more seriously often placed it in separate chapters at the end of the main work, as did the writers of the English *Universal History*. Lambert included more Chinese history than had the English historians, but his long section on China would be more accurately labeled description than history. Nor did Lambert attempt to integrate the histories of the various nations and peoples into a single narrative. His *Histoire générale* is not so much a universal or world history as an aggregate of many separate histories. Voltaire did a bit better. Apart from his first two chapters, devoted exclusively to China and containing much general description, he treated Chinese history within the chronological context of his world history. China is, therefore, a continuing part of the story. But the relationship between Chinese history and European history in the *Essai* is primarily chronological; Chinese history is not effectively integrated with Western history, but merely tacked on to the main story in chronologically smaller pieces.

Those writers who most effectively integrated ancient Chinese history with
ancient Western history—usually by identifying sage emperors with patriarchs or by describing the settlement of China after the universal flood—often lost interest in Chinese history once they had resolved the problem of ancient chronology. China may be the world’s oldest empire in Hase’s chronological tables, but after the mythological sage emperors, the events recorded in the column devoted to China are almost all dynastic changes. China sometimes re-entered the universal histories when their authors discussed the thirteenth-century Mongol Empire and its conquest of China. Many writers also recorded the Ming restoration in 1368, the establishment of the Jesuit mission in China during the last decades of the sixteenth century, and the Manchu conquest of 1644. But the centuries between the Ch’in dynasty (221–206 B.C.) and the Mongol conquest (1279 A.D.) are usually ignored. Even Voltaire says nothing about China between his description of the empire in the first two chapters of the *Essai* and his relation of the Mongol conquest two volumes later.

When Voltaire wrote his *Essai* in 1756, Martini’s *Sinicae historiae* was just short of a century old. Universal history as written by Europeans had changed considerably during that time. European historians in Voltaire’s day confronted an impressively large and sophisticated body of information about China and its ancient past. A mid-eighteenth-century historian might question or reject parts of ancient Chinese history and chronology; he might doubt the virtues and wonders of Chinese civilization described by the Jesuits; but it had become exceedingly difficult for him to ignore Chinese history. And for many writers the inclusion of ancient Chinese history had seriously altered the traditional conceptions of universal history. Few traces of the traditional organization and scope of world history remain in a work like the *Essai sur les moeurs*, for example.

Perhaps Voltaire should be regarded, therefore, not so much the pioneer of new trends in the writing of world history as the product of a century-long development. His work and his criticism of the work of earlier historians reflects and dramatizes the growing awareness in his day that the traditional structure and methodology of universal history was inadequate and that a new approach was necessary. Europe’s new knowledge of ancient Chinese history played a major role in creating that awareness. The stormy debates provoked by the Chinese annals contributed to an increasingly critical attitude toward historical sources, Western as well as Chinese. The sometimes awkward, usually inadequate, but increasingly unavoidable attempts to include China in the universal histories written by Europeans exposed as never before the problems and inadequacies of the traditional approach to world history.