

litical system of morals, without religion ; for the superstitions of Fo were imported among them from India. Their yellow skin, their prominent cheeks, their narrow and oblique eyes, and their scanty beard, render them so different from us, that one is tempted to believe that their ancestors and ours had escaped the great catastrophe on two different sides. But however this may be, the epoch which they assign to their deluge is nearly the same as ours.

The Chou-king is the most ancient of the Chinese books \* ; it is said to have been compiled by Confucius, about 2255 years ago, from fragments of more ancient works. Two hundred years afterwards, a general persecution of the men of letters, and destruction of the books, is said to have taken place under the emperor Chi-Hoang-ti, whose object in this was to destroy the traces of the feudal government established under the dynasty which preceded his. Forty years after, under the dynasty which had overturned that to which Chi-Hoang-ti belonged, a portion of the Chou-king was restored from memory by an old literatus, and another was discovered in a tomb ; but nearly the half of it was for ever lost. Now, this book, the most authentic which the Chinese

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\* See the preface to the edition of Chou-king, by M. de Guignes.