

perament. Their language is monosyllabic,—their writing is arbitrary hieroglyphics,—they have only a political morality, without religion, for the superstitions of Fo were brought to them from the Indians. Their yellow complexion, projecting cheek-bones, their narrow and oblique eyes, and scanty beard, render them so different from us, that we are tempted to believe that their ancestors and ours escaped at the great catastrophe by different sides; but, however that may be, they date their deluge from nearly the same epoch as our own.

The most ancient book of the Chinese, is called the Chou-King,(1) which is said to have been compiled by Confucius, from the fragments of former works, about 2255 years ago. Two centuries later, they say, was the persecution of letters, and the destruction of the books, under the emperor Chi-Hoangti, who wanted to destroy the traces of the feudal government, established under a dynasty previous to his own. Forty years afterwards, under the dynasty which had overthrown that to which Chi-Hoangti belonged, a part of the Chou-King was restored from memory by an old sage, and another was found in a tomb; but nearly half of it was utterly lost. But this book, the most authentic of China, begins the history of this country with Yao, an emperor so named, who it represents to us as occupied in making the waters pass away, *which being raised as high as heaven, were still laving the feet of the loftiest mountains, covering the hills that were less elevated,* and rendered the

(1) See the preface of the edition of Chou-King, by M. de Guignes.