

plains impassible.(1) The date of Yao is, by some fixed 4163 years before the present time; according to others, at 3943 years. The variety of opinions on this epoch extends even to 284 years.

Some pages farther on we find Yu, a minister and engineer, re-establishing the course of the waters, forming dykes, digging canals, and regulating the taxes of every province in China, that is to say, in an empire of six hundred leagues in every direction. The impossibility of such operations, after such events, shows that the whole is but a moral or political romance.(2)

More modern historians have added a series of emperors before Yao, but with a great many fabulous circumstances, without venturing to assign fixed dates to them, varying incessantly one with the other, even in number and names, and not being approved of by many of their countrymen. Fouhi with his serpent's body, his bull's head, and tortoise's teeth, and his successors not less monstrous, are as absurd, and have had no more reality than Enceladus and Briareus.

Is it possible that mere chance gave a result so striking as to make the traditional origin of the Assyrian, Indian, and Chinese monarchies agree in being as remote as 4000 years back? Would the ideas of nations, who have had so little communication with each other, whose language, religion and laws, have nothing in common, agree on this point, if they were not founded on truth?

We will not ask for precise dates from the Ame-

(1) Chou-King. French translation, p. 9.

(2) It is the Yu-King, or chap. 1, of the 2nd part of the Chou-King, pp. 43—60.