EARLY CHINESE HISTORY.

In continuation of the remarks on early Chinese mythology contained in my article styled Panku in the first number of Vol. xiv. of the *China Review*, I beg to offer a few supplementary observations. Ssu ma Ch'ien, our chief authority, quotes largely from the Shu ching or book of history, whole chapters of his history being composed of extracts from the books called the canon of Shun, the canon of Yao, the tribute of Yü, &c. Now I have shewn elsewhere that the authenticity of the Shu ching is questionable. But what is the earliest trustworthy historical date? Dr. Legge, in the prolegomena to the third volume of his Chinese Classics, states that in his opinion the Emperor Yü, whose date is generally given as B.C. 2205-2197, was a historical personage, and founder of the Chinese empire, but that nearly all that the book of history relates of his labours is fantastical exaggeration. He says, further on, that from the beginning of the Shang dynasty, B.C. 1766, we 'seem to tread the field of history with a somewhat confident step,' but yet he thinks that B.C. 775, when an eclipse of the sun occurred, is the first certain date in Chinese history. Mr. Mayers too makes the historical period of his chronology begin about this date. For 400 years, however, afterwards we have but the vaguest outline of events recorded, and strange to say the annals of the Ch'in dynasty are during this period twice as full of details as those of the reigning Chow Emperors. Father Premare who, with the other Jesuits in Peking, must have had access to the Imperial libraries some two hundred years ago, says that 'according to the Chinese historians we must distinguish between the evidently fabulous age preceding Fuhsi B.C. 2852, that the doubtful and uncertain period, to which we should pay no attention, is from Fuhsi to Wei lie wang B.C. 425, and that finally the sure and certain period is posterior to this date' (Lettres Edifiantes, xix, p. 457). It is time we rejected the pretensions of the Chinese to the extravagant antiquity to which they lay claim. Dr. Chalmers observes that the chronology of the Shu ching period is evidently spurious and written after the reformation of the calendar B.C. 104. It would not surprise me much if it was discovered that all the ancient history was invented about that time, for many of the names of the old worthies of the Imperial line seem to be connected with the heavenly bodies, while others represent the names of tribes known to the Chinese for the first time about that period. For instance Huang ti (the yellow god) had a son called Hsüan hsiao (玄枵) but this is the name of the 10th zodiacal sign corresponding to Capricorn-Aquarius. The name of the Emperor Chuan hsü (? Mercury) B. C. 2513, resembles the word Chuan yü, the old name for Meng yin hsien, a town in Shantung province (cf. Playfair's Cities of China No. 4859). The Emperor Ku or Kao hsin

(Great West) married a woman of the clan Tsou tzu, two characters which represent the 11th zodiacal sign or Aquarius-Pisces. Another of this Emperor's wives, Ch'ing tu, gave birth after a gestation of 14 months to Yao 堯 (lofty) who is said to have been 10 feet high and to have been called Emperor of Tang, supposed to be part of Chihli province, because he moved his seat of government there. This was the farfamed Emperor Yao of the classics, but his name was apparently that of a tribe of aborigines in the South of China. *According to the Hill and* Sea classic, sect. iii. 4, the Chiao Yao 焦僥 or Chow jao 周饒 were a tribe of cap-wearing pigmies 3 cubits high whose country was situated to the east of the country of the "three-headed men." This opens up various possibilities. The three heads may refer to the 3 heads of Buddhist doctrine, viz.: Buddha, the law, and the priesthood; and if so, it would shew that the originator of the story of Yao was acquainted with some of the Buddhist tenets. The country of the three heads would naturally be India. If my assumption is correct, the Chiao yao pigmies to the east of it would then be the Malays. In the term "Chow jao" referred to above we may even trace the origin of the "Chow" dynasty, whose founder came from the West to China. In the Bamboo books it is recorded that the pigmies brought a tribute of feathers to China in the 29th year of Yao's reign B.C. 2328! Yao was designated "essence of fire" and had a scarlet carriage drawn by white horses. The colour here referred to may have some connection with the Red land (Siam). White horse was the name of a tribe in the South-west of China known to the Chinese first about B.C. 116 (see Books of After Hans, chap. 86). Yao is said to have crossed the shifting sands, ennobled the chief of the Ssuchuan hills, warned the Ta hsia, attacked the Kü sow (渠搜), went westward to the Yü 沃 country, controlled the 'black teeth,' the 'perforated breasts,' the 'hanging ears,' and T'ientu (天督) countries. Now in the name Kü sow we are reminded of the father of the Emperor Shun, Yao's successor, who was called Ku sow or the blind man. Dr. Legge (Chinese Classics, Vol. iii. 1, p. 127) says that K'un lun, Si chih (析支), and Kü sow are understood to be the names of mountains giving names to the regions and tribes about them. The Si chih and Kü sow are, moreover, in the Book of the 'Tribute of Yü' called tribes of the Western Jung who came with a tribute of hair cloth and furs. The Kü sow tribe was probably located in Ssŭ-chuan province, for part of it used to be called So kü (索渠). [See Playfair, No. 6605.] The Ta hsia were a well-known tribe to the West of China. The term 'black teeth' refers doubtless to the Indo-Chinese people, and their habit of chewing betel. From a picture in the Hill and Sea classic representing a man being carried sedan-chair-fashion with a long pole passed through his body, I presume the legend of the 'perforated breasts' arose from an incorrect drawing of the mode of carrying palkees in India. 'Hanging ear' was a name applied to certain districts of Hainan island. T'ientu is probably a corruption of T'ienchu or Shêntu, i.e. India. It must be remembered that China began to trade with the countries to the West of her about B.C. 115, so that the names of these western people are very suggestive. Again in the name of Yao's son, Tanchu 丹朱 one can hardly avoid perceiving a reference to the Tansha 丹砂 or Chusha 硃砂 cinnabar, which was the basis of all the magic compounds prepared by Taoist doctors. If the historian invented the character of the son of Yao, one may suppose that he would take a name which was creating a stir in his day. Now we know that the magical arts of the priests were greatly resorted to in the latter half of the reign of Wuti B.C. 115-89. In the year B.C. 91 we read that a certain sorcery affair occurred, a wooden image having been discovered amongst the effects of the heir-apparent which the priests declared proved that the Emperor's life was in dan-

ger. In the last year of the Emperor's reign, however, the priests were dismissed from court as impostors. We need hardly try to trace the origin of every name given by the historian. 'Po yi' occurs repeatedly. This name is first given to one of Shun's ministers, but in it one recognizes the name of an aboriginal tribe still found in Yunnan province. The names of very many Emperors of the Hsia dynasty are those of asterisms, and one of the double character names of every Emperor of the Shang dynasty except the first consists of a cyclical character. If the quasi ancient records were invented early in the Han dynasty period, we cannot be surprised at finding the name Hsia how given to the founder of the Hsia dynasty, for it was the name of a celebrated scholar of the Han dynasty, and a contemporary of the historian. We also find another scholar of that time called Kung yü, the characters used being the very characters for the name of the book 'Tribute of Yü' reversed. The whole question of the authenticity of early Chinese history and the classics requires to be further investigated, and it is to be hoped that some of our noted sinologists will take it up.

HERBERT J. ALLEN.

LIST OF CHARACTERS USED IN SPELLING IN THE CONCISE DICTIONARY OF DR CHALMERS, WITH THEIR PRONUNCIATION IN PEKINGESE AND CANTONESE.

This List was prepared and arranged under the Radicals by the Rev. F. E. W. Hartmann with a view to facilitate the use of the Dictionary in determining the Canton pronunciation of characters. Such a table is all the more necessary, because the method of assigning each character to its place in the *Pei-wên-yün-fu* necessitated the use of a few rare characters. Being rare they are of course used only in spelling characters equally rare, but when they are occasionally met with, it is well to have a ready means of determining their phonetic power. I have added Wade's spelling to the characters, so that the List may be useful over a wider area.

THE CHINESE METHOD OF SPELLING.

In Chinese dictionaries and commentaries a way of indicating the pronunciation of any character by means of other two, which resembles our spelling, has been employed for centuries, and was probably introduced from India in connection with the study of Sanscrit. To the Chinese mind a syllable is a unity not to be divided into so many letters, a subdivision of articulate sounds of which they know nothing. The so-called spelling supposes only that a syllable can be cut in two (切), and even this most Chinese find it difficult to comprehend, so that the spelling in dictionaries and commentaries is useless to themselves. When the *Concise Dictionary* was made I was not sufficiently aware of this weakness of the Chinese mind and expected that by representing dialects correctly in the long-established way a service would be rendered to native scholars. In this I have been disappointed. But the European student should not find any difficulty with "spelling," provided he knows the alphabet used; and the object of this article is to explain the force of the characters used in spelling. Of the two characters used the first indicates the initial half of the syllable and the second the final half. Suppose the sound to be represented is *thing*. It is divided into two parts, an initial *th* and a final *ing*. Take some known word, say *thigh*, with the same initial for the first half and some other, say *king*, with the same final for the second half; place them together thus *th* (*igh k*) *ing*, and omit the letters within