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## *On the Origin of the Chinese,*

*Extracted from Sir William Jones's seventh Anniversary Discourse.*

THE word *China*, concerning which I shall offer some new remarks, is well known to the people, whom we call the *Chinese*; but they never apply it (I speak of the learned among them) to themselves or to their country: themselves, according to Father VISDELOU, they describe as the *people of HAN*, or of some other illustrious family, by the memory of whose actions they flatter their national pride; and their country they call *Chûm cuë*, or the *Central Kingdom*, representing it in their symbolical characters by a parallelogram exactly bisected: at other times they distinguish it by the words *Tien-hia*, or *What is under Heaven*, meaning *all that is valuable on Earth*. Since they never name themselves with moderation, they would have no right to complain, if they knew, that *European* authors have ever spoken of them in the extremes of applause or of censure: by some they have been extolled as the oldest and the wisest, as the most learned and most ingenious, of nations; whilst others have derided their pretensions to antiquity, condemned their government as abominable, and arraigned their manners as inhuman, without allowing them an element of science, or a single art, for which they have been indebted to some more ancient and more civilized race of men. The truth perhaps lies, where we usually find it, between the extremes; but it is not my design to accuse or to defend the *Chinese*, to depress or to aggrandize them: I shall confine myself to the discussion of a question connected with my former discourses, and far less easy to be solved than any hitherto started. "Whence came the singular people, who long had governed *China*, before they were conquered by the *Tartars*?" On this problem, the solution of which has no concern, indeed, with our political or commercial interests, but a very material connection, if I mistake not, with interests, of a higher nature, four opinions have been advanced, and all rather peremptorily asserted, than supported by argument and evidence. By a few writers it has been urged, that the *Chinese* are an original race, who have dwelled for ages, if not from eternity, in the land, which they now possess; by others, and chiefly by the missionaries,