

established themselves; but headless, that *Maháchina*, which was also mentioned in his book, extended to the eastern and southern oceans. I believe, nevertheless, that the *Chinese* empire, as we now call it, was not formed when the laws of *MENU* were collected. It was not till the eighth century before the birth of our Saviour, that a small kingdom was erected in the province of *Shen-si*, the capital of which stood nearly in the *thirty-fifth* degree of northern latitude, and about *five* degrees to the west of *Si-gan*: both the country and its metropolis were called *Chin*; and the dominion of its princes was gradually extended to the east and west. The territory of *Chin*, so called by the old *Hindus*, by the *Persians*, and by the *Chinese* (while the *Greeks* and *Arabs* were obliged by their defective articulation to miscall it *Sin*) gave its name to a race of emperors, whose tyranny made their memory so unpopular, that the modern inhabitants of *China* hold the word in abhorrence, and speak of themselves as the people of a milder and more virtuous dynasty; but it is highly probable that the whole nation descended from the *Chinas* of *MENU*, and, mixing with the *Tartars*, by whom the plains of *Honan* and the more southern provinces were thinly inhabited, formed by degrees the race of men, whom we now see in possession of the noblest empire in *Asia*.

In support of an opinion, which I offer as the result of long and anxious inquiries, I should regularly proceed to examine the language and letters, religion and philosophy, of the present *Chinese*, and subjoin some remarks on their ancient monuments, on their science, and on their arts both liberal and mechanical; but their spoken *language*, not having been preserved by the usual symbols of articulate sounds, must have been for many ages in a continual flux; their *letters*, if we may so call them, are merely the symbols of ideas; their popular *religion* was imported from *India* in an age comparatively modern; and their *philosophy* seems yet in so rude a state, as hardly to deserve the appellation; they have no *ancient monuments*, from which their origin can be traced even by plausible conjecture; their *sciences* are wholly exotic and their *mechanical arts* have nothing in them characteristic of a particular family; nothing, which any set of men, in a country so highly favoured by nature, might not have discovered and improved. They have indeed, both national music and national poetry, and both of them beautifully pathetick; but of painting, sculpture, or architecture, as arts of imagination, they seem (like other *Asiatics*) to have no idea. Instead, therefore, of enlarging separately on each of those heads, I shall briefly inquire, how far the literature and religious practices of *China* confirm or oppose the proposition, which I have advanced.

We have ocular proof, that the few radical characters of the *Chinese* were originally (like our astronomical and chymical symbols) the pictures or outlines of visible objects, or figurative signs for simple ideas, which they have multiplied by the most ingenious combinations and the liveliest metaphors; but, as the system is peculiar, I believe, to themselves and the *Japanese*, it would be idly ostentatious to enlarge on it at present; and, it neither corroborates nor weakens the opinion, which I endeavour to support. The same may as truly be said of their *spoken* language; for, independently of its constant fluctuation during a series of ages, it has the peculiarity of excluding four or five sounds, which other nations articulate, and is clipped into monosyllables, even when the ideas expressed by them, and the written symbols for those ideas, are very complex. This has arisen, I suppose, from the