

The AACCP Newsletter

Since 1970

Asian American Curriculum Project, Inc.

February 2009

AsianAmericanBooks.com - The Most Complete Nonprofit-Source for Asian American Books

4707 Began In 1912

By Leonard D. Chan

At a recent Chinese New Year event, someone asked (challenge) me to tell him what year it was in the Chinese calendar and how it was derived. He went on to mention how some bible experts had derived a date for the beginning of time and was curious to know if this was how the Chinese also picked a starting year. Even our commonly used Gregorian Calendar has its basis in the Bible and Jesus Christ.

So what year was it in the Chinese Calendar and why?

Finding out that the current year (beginning on January 26, 2009) in the Chinese calendar is 4707 was pretty easy. I found this out in one of the books that AACCP carries, but finding out why proved to be a little more difficult. My American and Euro-centric education and AACCP's focus on the Asian and Pacific Islander "American" experience did not prepare me to have an answer to this gentleman's question. As far as I had known, the establishing of the Chinese calendar year didn't have any connection to the Chinese American experience. After doing some research on the subject, I discovered that it most certainly did.

Understanding How Years Were Designated Prior to 1912

The establishing of a continuous numerical year for the Chinese was actually a fairly recent occurrence. Prior to January 1, 1912, years were noted by era names that were set by the Emperor of China. If the era was called Blue (this is just an example, I don't know if there ever was such an era), you might describe the first day of the era as "first day, of the first month, of the first year of Blue."

In this system, you would need to be familiar with all the era names in order to know the relative position of a date in history. Although the system seems pretty different from the continuous

numerical calendar that is in common use today, the era year name system was in use in China for approximately 2000 years.

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties (the most recent two dynasties, lasting from 1368 to 1912), each emperor chose an era name that lasted their whole reign. A change in government would thus result in a change of era.

The End of the Qing Dynasty and the Start of the Continuous Numbered Years

When the last emperor Puyi was dethroned, this marked an end to the Qing Dynasty and the end of his era. Sun Yat-sen, the provisional president of the new Republic of China, declared that the republic had begun on the 13th day of the 11th month of the 4609th year of the reign of Huang-di (the Yellow Emperor). Since this date corresponded to January 1, 1912 on the Gregorian calendar, Sun Yat-sen's declaration started the precedence for the use of a continuous numbering system dating back to the start of the reign of the Yellow Emperor.

From my limited research, Sun Yat-sen's motives and calculation of the start date are not completely clear.

A Little Bit About Sun Yat-sen

Although Sun Yat-sen's Hawaiian birth certificate is in doubt - most historians believe he was born in China - it is certain that Sun spent some of his formative years in Hawaii and that he had a westernized high school education during this period. Sun was an official American citizen, which allowed him the freedom to travel in America, Europe, Canada, and Japan. Clearly from his writings and actions, Sun was influenced by his experiences in the Western World.

(Continued on Page 3)

Merced Assembly Center Commemorative Monument

On February 19, 1942 Presidential Order 9066 was signed and over 110,000 Japanese Americans along the West Coast were ordered to abandon their homes and report to assembly centers to be interned.

In the spring of 2008, Congressman Dennis Cardoza (D - 18th District) requested the chapters of the JACL near Merced to work on getting a monument built at the Merced County Fairgrounds to commemorate the 4,669 Americans of Japanese ancestry that were detained at that location.

A group called the History of Merced Assembly Center Commemorative Committee (MACCC) was formed to work on building this monument.

A Berkeley, California foundry has been given the task of designing and building the monument, which will consist of stacked suitcases with a forlorn-looking little girl sitting on them. The monument will include descriptive signage of the infamous historical event that took place there.

This coming Saturday, February 21, 2009, the MACCC is holding a Day of Remembrance fundraising dinner in hopes of raising the approximately \$80,000 to \$100,000 needed to build the monument. Committee member Marlene Tanioka says that they hope to have the monument done in time for next year's Day of Remembrance event.

For more information and to make a donation for this effort, contact Bob Taniguchi at 209-631-5645.

Give Us Your Feedback

Please feel free to send us your reviews, comments, and book suggestions.

Up Coming Events

Here are some events that AACP will soon be attending. Invite us to your events.

Date/Time	Event	Location
Feb. 21	Day of Remembrance fundraising dinner for the building of a monument at the Merced Assem. Center	Merced Fairgrounds Merced, CA
Mar. 8 10am-5:00pm	Chinese New Year's Celebration	Stockton Civic Aud. 525 N. Center St. Stockton, CA
Mar. 25-27	Asian and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education (APAHE) 2009 National Conference	Hotel Kabuki San Francisco, CA
Mar. 28	Shinenkai N. CA Japanese American Seniors	Union City, CA
Apr. 25 8-3pm	1st Annual Northern CA National Pacific Islander Educator Network (NPIEN) Conference	Evergreen Valley College 3095 Yerba Buena Rd. San Jose, CA
Apr. 26	Nikkei Matsuri Arts and Crafts Festival	San Jose, CA
May 9	9th Asian Pacific American Heritage Celebration in San Mateo	Central Park Recreation Center San Mateo, CA
Other Event of Interest that AACP May Not Attend		
Feb. 21	Catherine Irwin presents her book Voices from the Children's Village of Manzanar	Manzanar Nat. Hist. Site Interpretive Center Manzanar, CA
Feb. 21	Canton Footprints, Sacramento's Chinese Legacy- book reading by historian Philip P. Choy	CHSA San Francisco, CA
Feb. 28	Assoc. of Chinese Cooking Teachers(ACCT) "Taste of Good Luck" Chinese New Year Dinner	Four Seas Restaurant San Francisco, CA
Feb. 28- Mar. 1	129th Bok Kai Festival, Parade, and Bomb Day	3rd & D St. Marysville, CA
Mar. 6-8	California Council for the Social Studies Conference	Ontario Con. Center Ontario, CA
Mar. 12-22	27th San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival	San Francisco, Berkeley, San Jose, CA
Mar. 13-15	The Chinese Education Conference 2009	InterContinental Hotel San Francisco, CA
Mar. 28-29	Reading the World XI	USF 2350 Turk Blvd. San Francisco, CA

Editor's Message

Hello Everyone,

I didn't get to send this off in time, but congratulations to the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation and the California State Parks Service for their grand reopening of the US Immigration Station Museum on Angel Island this February 15th. The main building of the museum had been closed for remodeling for over three years. If you haven't had a chance to visit this important historic site, now is your chance.

For those of you that are finding this email in your junk or spam email box please help us out by figuring out how your spam filter works and making the correction so that email from us doesn't get filtered out. We are discovering many problems with some email providers and it is making it difficult for us to contact you out there.

For those of you that might wish to cancel your newsletter subscription, just reply to this email with the word "Unsubscribe" in the subject heading. Please don't mark the email as spam, because doing so may cause your email service to blacklist us and ruin it for those that still want to receive the newsletter. Thank you.

Hope you all had a chance to celebrate the Lunar New Year. For those of you in the Stockton area, you'll still have another chance to celebrate on March 8th. Hope to see you there.

Bye.

Leonard Chan
Executive Editor

2704 Began In 1912

(Continued from page 1)

It is not hard to imagine that he and other Chinese revolutionaries must have contemplated a new era after the fall of the Qing Dynasty - including the naming of this new era. By dating the new era back to a distant past Chinese emperor, they would sever the link to the Qing Dynasty, who some still consider to be foreign Manchus from the north, and announce to the world of China's long established proud history.

Why Stop at the Yellow Emperor?

My research did not find how Sun Yat-sen chose 4609, but I'm sure there must have been some research on his part or some scholars that helped him pick a date. Dates going this far back are estimates at best and the Yellow Emperor lived in such a distant time that he is often mythologized.

The famous Chinese historian Sima Qian who wrote his Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji) in 109 BC to 91 BC, was most likely the source for the date of the Yellow Emperor's reign. Sima Qian was the first Chinese historian to systematically research and record over 2000 years of ancient Chinese history. Since the Yellow Emperor was the furthest back that Sima could record with any accuracy and since the Yellow Emperor is often considered the founder of the Chinese people, it must have seemed obvious to Sun Yat-sen to use this as the starting point of the numerical year system.

Although the Chinese have long since adopted the Common Era Gregorian Calendar, many Chinese, especially those in America, still continue to make mention each Lunar New Year, the numerical year system that Sun Yat-sen established in 1912.

Sources and Resources

Chinese Calendar

- Chinese calendar
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_calendar
- How the Era System works
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_era_name

General Chinese History

- History of China
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_china
- Timeline of Chinese history
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Chinese_history

Events and People From Chinese History

- asiawind.com on Huang Di (Yellow Emperor)
<http://www.asiawind.com/pub/forum/fhakka/mhonarc/msg00383.html>
- Wikipedia on Huang-di (Yellow Emperor)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_Emperor
- The Xinhai Revolution or Hsinhai Revolution
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xinhai_Revolution
- Wikipedia on Sun Yat-sen
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Yat-sen

Information on Sima Qian and His Work

- Wikipedia on Sima Qian (Ssuma Ch'en)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sima_Qian
- Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Records_of_the_Grand_Historian
- Original Chinese text of the Shiji
<http://www.guoxue.com/shibu/24shi/shiji/sjml.htm>
- Partial English translation of the Shiji
http://books.google.com/books?id=Rw41aF8irLQC&pg=PR8&dq=%22records+of+the+grand+historian%22&as_brr=1&sig=luA5bQ4Rb16_I-NSb_HBVfLY9ml

Formula For the Numerical Chinese Year

Chinese Year = CE Year + 2697 +1 if date after Lunar New

CE stands for Common Era –
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Era

ADDITIONS TO OUR WEBSITE

The following books are discounted for subscribers to our newsletter. The discounts on these books end March 8, 2009.

	<p>Twice Orphaned Voices from the Children's Village of Manzanar By Catherine Irwin Preface by Paul Spickard 2008, 300 pages, Paperback.</p> <p>Twice Orphaned is a collection of interviews done with Japanese American orphans. This book sheds light on what life was like for these kids that were raised in orphanages before the war and in a special facility called the Children's Village at the World War II Manzanar internment camp. Much has been written of the Japanese American family experience in World War II internment camps. This is the first to tell the story of those that suffered the experience without their parents.</p> <p>Item #3540, Normally \$20.95 ... for newsletter subscribers \$16.76</p>
	<p>Images of America Manzanar By Jane Wehrey 2008, 128 pages, Paperback.</p> <p>Arcadia Publishing's wonderful Images of America series now turns its efforts to revealing the history of Manzanar, California. Author Jane Wehrey, native to the Owens Valley where Manzanar is located, takes us from the 1800s, when the area was still inhabited by native Americans, on through World War II, when it was a Japanese American internment camp, and concluding with it as a National Park. Many more seldom seen photographs of the Manzanar Internment camp are included in this book - works of famed photographers Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and internee Toyo Miyatake are featured.</p> <p>Item #3545, Normally \$19.99 ... for newsletter subscribers \$15.99</p>
	<p>Soldiers of Conscience Japanese American Military Resisters in World War II By Shirley Castelnuovo 2008, 162 pages, Hardback.</p> <p>Soldiers of Conscience reveals the accounts of over 200 Japanese American soldiers that resisted aspects of their military service during World War II. These soldiers' resistance was an act of protest against their unfair treatment in the military and/or the general situation of their families' internment. Soldiers of Conscience tells of how these protestors were sent to special units for those that were labeled as potentially subversive and of how others were even imprisoned. Included are follow-up accounts of what happened to some of these men after the war as they returned to communities that often initially treated them as pariahs.</p> <p>Item #3544, Normally \$49.95 ... for newsletter subscribers \$44.96</p>
	<p>Wabi Sabi By Mark Reibstein Illustrated by Ed Young 2008, 32 pages, Hardback.</p> <p>A cat named Wabi Sabi goes on a journey to find out the meaning of her name. As it asks other animal characters for their thoughts about her name, it learns about the connection of beauty and simplicity. Interesting story told with collages and haiku poetry.</p> <p>Item #3542, Normally \$16.99 ... for newsletter subscribers \$13.59</p>
	<p>The Year of the Ox Tales from the Chinese Zodiac By Oliver Chin Illustrated by Miah Alcorn 2008, 33 pages, Hardback.</p> <p>Olivia the young Ox discovers her true nature. When a flood occurs, she must work hard to save the town and her friend Mei. The Year of the Ox is the fourth in Oliver Chin's series of storybooks about the twelve different animals in the Chinese Zodiac.</p> <p>Item #3543, Normally \$15.95 ... for newsletter subscribers \$12.76</p>

© 2009 by Asian American Curriculum Project, Inc. (a non-profit organization since 1970)
 Visit our website at AsianAmericanBooks.com

529 East Third Avenue, San Mateo, California 94401 - Tel 650-375-8286