

READING ECLIPSE REPORTS FROM THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

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This paper follows the fortuna of Chinese eclipse reports within the discussions and, later, controversies among early modern European astronomers and chronologers, missionaries and their critics, authors of 'celestial histories' and of histories of the human spirit. Some juxtaposed such reports with ancient accounts of the darkness over Golgotha; others, with the poverty of historical annals that lacked such witnesses to their veracity; still others, with the progress of civilization writ large. In reconstructing specific episodes of how European scholars read Chinese reports of eclipses, we can better understand the ways in which accounts of eclipse observation and calculation motivated broader analyses of global history.