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Book review: The Lost Millenium

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Subtitled History's Timetables Under Siege, this fascinating, if sometimes scientifically dense treatise outlines a controversy that apparently has been simmering within science and history communities for ages.

The standard chronology of recorded human history, it seems, may be entirely out of whack.

Errors supposedly made in chronicling Greek, Egyptian, Roman, Vatican and biblical histories could mean, among other things, that Jesus lived only 1,000 years ago.

Diacu, a professor of mathematics at B.C.'s University of Victoria and an expert on chaos theory, reports on findings by a controversial Russian counterpart named Anatoli Fomenko and his allies who make the allegation that time is indeed out of joint and this may not be the 21st century after all.

Diacu is skeptical, finding Fomenko's research techniques to be shoddy. But, he admits, the renegade Russian has raised serious doubts about some of the most famous dates in ancient and medieval history.

The doubts arise when descriptions of events in human civilization contained in ancient documents are matched up with fixed and measurable astronomical dates for such things as eclipses.

Also, ancient chroniclers may have made errors, lied or simply been improperly translated. And many ancient texts may have been faked or revised in the Middle Ages.

Diacu lays out both sides of the argument fairly. His detail may cause lay people to skip the occasional paragraph or even chapter, but the idea that the calendar may be out by as much as 1,000 years is staggering.

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The Lost Millennium

By Florin Diacu (Knopf Canada)

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