

The Lost Millennium
History's Timetables Under Siege
Written by Florin Diacu

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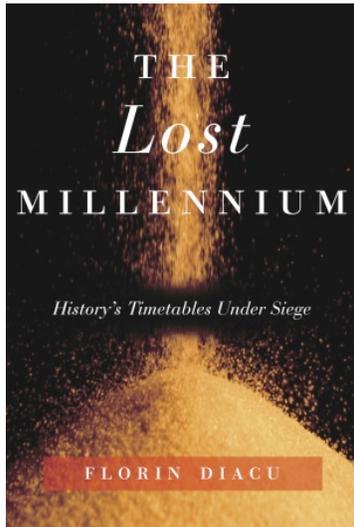
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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Have you ever wondered how we really know what year it is? Part detective story, part conspiracy theory, part scientific history, **The Lost Millennium** explores the astonishing possibility that our calendar is out by a thousand years.

A chance conversation at a conference in Mexico started mathematician Florin Diacu on an amazing journey to make sense of one of the strangest — and if true, most revolutionary — theories you'll ever encounter. To understand how scientists could be sceptical about what year it is, Florin Diacu explores the fascinating history of chronology — from Egyptian horoscopes to the work of Isaac Newton, with cameos by Voltaire and Edmund Halley — making the startling discovery that our calendar is far from ironclad. It all depends, rather, on the dating of ancient events — about which there is real controversy.

At once accessible and profound, **The Lost Millennium** examines the arguments of present-day chronological revisionists such as the Russian scholar Anatoli Fomenko, who claims that our system of dating is horribly askew. Fomenko cites evidence from ancient astronomy, linguistics and cartography, and a crucial

manuscript by Ptolemy, staking his scientific prestige on a theory so controversial that it will change the way you think about time, history and the calendar on your wall. The field has also inspired its share of now-discredited cranks, such as Immanuel Velikovsky, a media celebrity of the 1950s. His notorious book **Worlds in Collision** argued that biblical events are incorrectly dated.

Beautifully written and peopled with fascinating characters from past and present, **The Lost Millennium** is essential reading for anyone who believes they're living in the 21st century.

REVIEW QUOTES

“Diacu gives both sides of the argument fairly but the mere idea that the calendar may be out by as much as 1,000 years is staggering.”

—*The London Free Press*

“A stimulating new book.... [Diacu has] a gift for framing complex ideas in ways anyone can understand.”

—*Toronto Star*

“Intriguing.... [Diacu] set out to explore this controversy with an open mind.... His account is at its best when he wrestles with the many contradictions of both the accepted and revisionist chronologies.... He wades into celestial mechanics with a dizzying discussion of eclipses, astronomical calculations and algebraic formulas.”

—*The Globe and Mail*

“[Diacu explores] the ideas of a maverick Russian mathematician named Anatoli Fomenko ... [who] argues that time is out of joint.... It's an understatement to call this idea revolutionary.”

—*Maclean's*

“Too many books arrive on bookshelves tricked out with more hype than they can justify; rare is the book for which no amount of hype can match its significance. Florin Diacu's *The Lost Millennium* is just such a book, a slim but dense volume that makes a convincing case that everything we know about time may be wildly wrong. Diacu, a Romanian-born mathematician who teaches at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, has written an electrifying summary of a debate that's been raging quietly in the worlds of history, astronomy and mathematics for decades, even centuries, on the idea that our conception of time, and the dates by which we mark the passing of history, might be drastically in error, by as much as a thousand years.”

—*Metro Toronto*

“In his thrilling, highly readable, and important new book, *The Lost Millennium: History's Timetables Under Siege*, UVic math professor Florin Diacu explores the rarefied field of historical chronology—the work of dating the past. Establishing

chronology demands rare erudition, drawing on physics, chemistry, literature, folklore, geology, astronomy, and linguistics. Diacu's book explores all of these, from Biblical scholars to the science of radiocarbon dating."

—*Focus: Victoria's Magazine of People, Ideas and Culture*

"At age 17 I made a heartfelt commitment to my math teacher, a dedicated man named Mr. Frodsham, who despaired of ever cramming the binomial theorem into my reluctant cementhead. He did not succeed. I swore to him that if I passed Mathematics 30 I would never, ever open another math textbook as long as I lived. I promised never to take another math class . . . I broke my promise to Mr. Frodsham last week and read Florin Diacu's *The Lost Millennium: History's Timetables Under Siege*."

—*The Edmonton Journal*

"Technical chronology — the art of dating the past — is an amazing field: it's the spot where the tectonic plates of exact science and humanistic scholarship intersect. Over the centuries, astronomers, mathematicians and historians have battled to find fixed points, usually in the movements of the stars and planets, by which they could date the great events of history precisely. It's very hard to do this, and most of those who tried have been more ingenious in their own right than tolerant of criticism. The ensuing struggles have enlisted both great minds, like Isaac Newton, and wild speculators, like Immanuel Velikovsky. Florin Diacu, a polyglot and erudite mathematician, lays out old and recent debates with great clarity, and offers the first detailed account for non-specialists of the radical revisionist theories of Anatoli Fomenko and his colleagues. His book — like most of those he describes — will certainly become a flash point in its own right. For the general reader, it offers a fascinating look at an unknown world."

—*Anthony Grafton, Professor of European History, Princeton University*

"Diacu takes the position of high-sceptic in the middle of an epic, unfriendly disagreement between the conventions of western history and a renegade group of Russian mathematicians arguing that the Middle Ages never happened. But even with the understood history of civilization at issue, Diacu believes nothing at face value and questions everything on both sides. A fascinating read."

—*Timothy Taylor*

"What makes this book so remarkable is Diacu's unstinting commitment to uncovering the truth. It is a superb exemplar of open, rigorous, yet eminently readable inquiry. It will fascinate anyone with an interest in how science is done or how history is constructed."

—*Jan Zwicky*

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Florin Diacu is a Professor of Mathematics and former Director of the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences at the University of Victoria. He is the author of **Celestial Encounters**, a history of ideas in the field of chaos theory. He lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

Excerpt: *The Lost Millennium*

FLORIN DIACU

Where Did the Time Go?

Those whose chronology is confused cannot give a true account of history.

-- Tatian

Mexicans call Cuernavaca "the city of the eternal spring." In the Tepozteco Valley, where the city rests, the mornings are clear, the afternoons turn hazy, and the evenings are blessed with a tropical rain.

I spent a week in September 1994 a few miles from the city, in the hacienda-style resort of Cocoyoc. The place would have resembled the Garden of Eden were it not for the volcanic mountain Popocatepetl, which -- though too far away to pose an imminent threat -- loomed in the distance, rings of smoke hanging above its icy cone. A conference had brought together mathematicians from three continents. All week we had listened to lectures, solved problems, discussed ideas, and learned new techniques to help us keep up with developments in our field.

On the last day of the conference, I was having lunch with fellow mathematicians Tudor Ratiu and Ernesto Pérez-Chavela. Like me, Tudor had been born and raised in Romania. Nine years my senior, he now taught at the University of California in Santa Cruz. Ernesto, a young professor at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa in Mexico City, was a co-organizer of the Cocoyoc meeting.

During lunch, Ernesto told us the story of Cocoyoc. In the local dialect, cocoyoc means coyote, an animal often seen in the area centuries ago. The resort, endowed with swimming pools, tennis courts, and a golf course, had once been a hacienda and apparently had been founded almost five centuries ago by the Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortés. Ernesto's account of Cocoyoc's origin sounded like a legend. It might have been true, but it made us wonder how much fiction finds its way into the history books.

"It's a fascinating subject," Tudor said. "It reminds me of a Russian colleague, Anatoli Fomenko, who thinks that a lot of the 'historical record' is fiction. So he's researching history with mathematical tools."

Ernesto looked surprised, and I must have too, for Tudor asked if we knew about Fomenko. We hadn't heard of him before, but the idea of applying mathematics to the study of history seemed interesting enough. My knowledge of such applications didn't go beyond understanding the simple differential equation that explains carbon dating.

"He's from the University of Moscow," Tudor explained, "and is quite active in several fields of mathematics. Something of a polymath. I met him in Berkeley a few years ago. His work in chronology has convinced him that the Middle Ages never happened. Apparently the authorities who fixed the dates misinterpreted the ancient documents, and their mistakes have been perpetuated ever since. Fomenko believes that the history of humankind is about a thousand years shorter than we think."

"He can't be serious," I said.

History has been an interest of mine since I was eleven. In my early teenage years I wanted to become an archaeologist, to discover and explore ancient ruins and unravel the mystery of lost kingdoms. I was fascinated with the idea of digging the earth and finding traces of dead civilizations. The curiosity I felt for antiquity was fuelled by the books I had read about Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Hittites of Asia Minor, the Hebrew and the Minoan-Mycenaean civilizations, early India, China, and Eurasia, the Assyrian Empire, Dacia, Thrace, and the Greek and Roman worlds.

But my gift for the exact sciences and success in mathematics competitions steered me in a different direction. Nevertheless, my interest in antiquity survived, and I kept up my reading in ancient history, watched documentaries, and continued to learn new things about the distant past of humankind. So, not surprisingly, my first reaction to Fomenko's claim was total disbelief.

"He's very serious," Tudor said, "but don't ask me why. If I remember well, it's not only the Middle Ages. He thinks that several shorter periods, which add up to a thousand years, have been created by mistakes in the dating process."

"A millennium that lost its way in history?" Ernesto asked.

"Something like that."

"Has he published anything about it?" I inquired.

"Plenty. I got a paper from him last week, a day or two before leaving Santa Cruz."

"What about?" I replied.

"It's an examination of ancient and medieval dynasties. He argues that many of them overlap instead of being successive."

"That's hard to believe," I said. "Real historians must have thought about those things."

"I'd give him the benefit of the doubt," Ernesto said. "Think of Einstein or Newton or Darwin. They were unknown in their field once, but they proved everyone wrong. That's how scientific revolutions happen."

"Perhaps you're right," I said. "I have no experience with chronology. Still, this sounds incredible." Then, turning to Tudor, I asked: "Is Fomenko trustworthy?"

"I don't know him well, but he's a brilliant mathematician. He has written a dozen books and more than a hundred articles -- excellent, as far as my field is concerned. I've also heard that he's just been elected to the Russian Academy of Sciences. It's a highly respected institution."

Tudor and I had spent hours talking together that week in Cocoyoc. He's a skilled mathematician, and I trusted his judgment. If he didn't dismiss Fomenko's claims from the outset, it meant I had to keep an open mind. But I would have liked to see the arguments.

"What do you think?" I asked. "Is he right?"

"He's not bluffing, but I have no idea if he's right. Other people must agree with him, otherwise he wouldn't be able to publish this stuff in serious journals."

"Has he written any books on chronology?" Ernesto asked.

"Yes, in Russian. But -- if I remember correctly -- an English translation is either about to come out or is in print already."

I made a mental note to track it down once I returned home.

"From what I remember of the history I learned in school," Ernesto said, "the Middle Ages are not well documented."

"This is definitely true for the history of Romania," I said. "The Romans conquered Dacia in AD 106, then mixed with the Dacians and imposed their language and culture. But in 271 they withdrew their legions and moved them south of the Danube, which was a good shield against barbarian attacks. From then until the twelfth century we know only about the kings Gelu, Glad, and Menumorut, who reigned over some parts of Transylvania, and whom the Hungarian rulers fought when invading the region. But aside from these details, more than eight hundred years of Romanian history are unaccounted for."

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