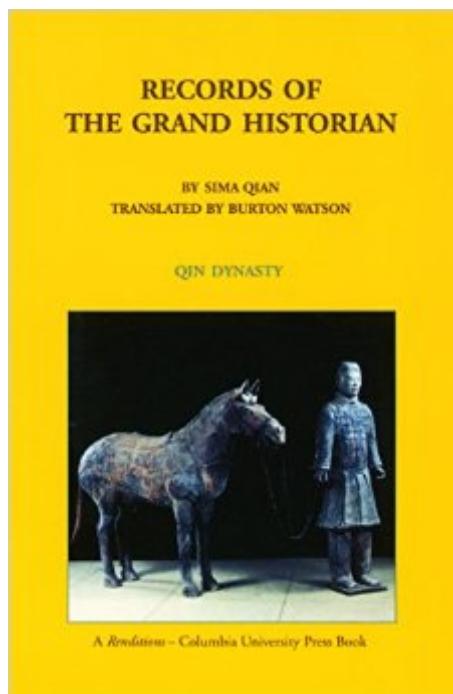


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Records Of The Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty



Synopsis

Sima Qian (145?-90? BCE) was the first major Chinese historian. His *Shiji*, or Records of the Grand Historian, documents the history of China and its neighboring countries from the ancient past to his own time. These three volumes cover the Qin and Han dynasties.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press; 3rd edition (April 15, 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0231081693

ISBN-13: 978-0231081696

Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 6 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (13 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #247,630 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #274 inÂ Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Asia #468 inÂ Books > History > Asia > China #643 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Ethnic Studies

Customer Reviews

Sima Qian was appointed grand historian of the Emperor Wu's court in 108 B.C. In his Records of the Grand Historian he describes the events which he witnessed or heard of that occurred during his lifetime, which offers the modern historian a fairly accurate account of a contemporary historian of the Han Dynasty. He composed his records from conversations he had with courtiers. In addition, he also consulted a plethora of documents and files which were stored in the palace as well as having had the ability to interview generals which enabled him to comment on the military institutions of the Han Dynasty. Sima Qian had the ability to accompany the emperor on his visits to the provinces where he was able to record the "barbarian" tribes and lands which were brought under Han rule by Emperor Wu. In Sima Qian's records we also have evidence of the penal system and the conditions in the prison system. Qian wrote very detailed descriptions of these penal conditions for he had an intimate experience with them, having been punished for his "attempting 'to deceive the emperor'" (xii). He was accused of using "veiled" words in his description of Emperor Wu, which was Qian's way of criticizing the emperor using language and words that were not outright critical, but inferred disapproval of the emperor and his actions. The purpose of his official history is to record things so that the people who will be reading the history will be able to

understand their past. This need to understand where one comes from helps states and individuals determine how and why they got to where they are. He organizes his accounts thematically, he discusses the military, generals, and he offers a geographic and ethnographic account of the peoples in the various "barbarian" provinces as well.

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