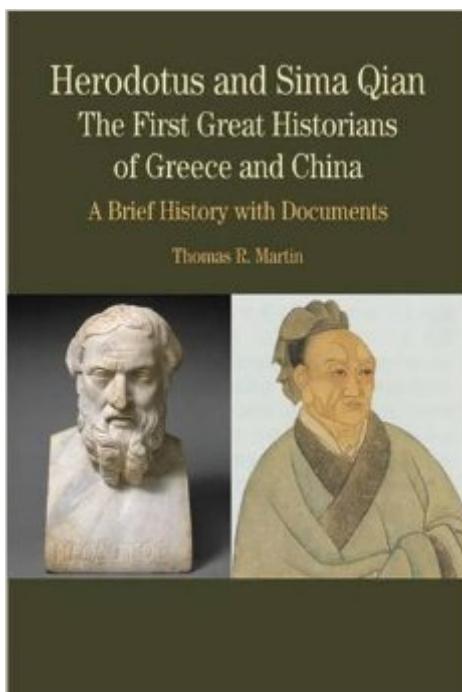


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Herodotus And Sima Qian: The First Great Historians Of Greece And China: A Brief History With Documents (Bedford Cultural Editions Series)



Synopsis

In this accessible volume, Thomas R. Martin compares the writings of Herodotus in ancient Greece with those of Sima Qian in ancient China to demonstrate the hallmarks of early history writing. While these authors lived in different centuries and were not aware of each other's works, Martin shows the similar struggles that each grappled with in preparing their historical accounts and how their efforts helped invent modern notions of history writing and the job of the historian. The introduction's cross-cultural analysis includes a biography of each author, illustrating the setting and times in which he worked, as well as a discussion of how each man introduced interpretation and moral judgment into his writing. The accompanying documents include excerpts from Herodotus' The Histories and Sima Qian's Shiji, which illustrate their approach to history writing and their understanding of their own cultures. Also featured are maps and illustrations, a chronology, questions to consider, and a selected bibliography.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you try to use this for academic purposes, prepare to get an F. This has been submitted to an online database as my own work. From the wake of times that had given birth to legends of gods, myths of demons and dragons, and heroic accounts of individuals with supernatural abilities, arose the desire to study and record the human nature. In this classical era of the Mediterranean, the Greeks had come to view nearly all groups of people outside their own kind as barbarians. The once dominant hunting and gathering societies of Asia had become the outsiders of Chinese

civilization, fierce barbarians at the gates of walled cities that attempted to shelter the riches within. Quite apart from the obvious material items to be gained from war, there emerged a different form of treasure - that of an individual's recorded legacy. Herodotus and Sima Qian were certainly not the first to make historical records; nevertheless, their accounts stand out for their ability to highlight the impact of individuals within the context of a variety of historical accounts and the legends of their times. In the account of the Lydian ruler Candaules (Document 1), Herodotus explains that "among the Lydians, and indeed among barbarians in general, it is extremely shameful even for a man to be seen naked," and relates the consequences of this shame to subsequent revenge (33). As a result of compelling his bodyguard Gyges to view his wife naked, Candaules violated the norms of Lydian society. Herodotus therefore seems to view his wife as being justified in plotting to have him killed, and the event shaped what was to come. In tying divine influence to the actions of an individual, Herodotus tells the story of Croesus, descendant of Gyges.

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