

Good morning Professor Honey, and good afternoon everyone. Today I want to introduce the great historian Sima Qian.

Sima Tan, the father of Sima Qian, served as the court historian 太史公. He systematically summarized the advantages and disadvantages of the ideas of Yin Yang, Confucianism, Mohism, Legalism, the School of Logicians and Taoism from the Spring and Autumn Period to the early Han Dynasty, and highly affirmed Taoism.

Sima Qian, born in 145 BC, his style was Zizhang. Sima Qian was born in Longmen (one says in nowadays the Hancheng City of Shanxi 陝西 Province, or in the Hejin City of Shanxi 山西 Province). He was a historian, writer and thinker of the Western Han Dynasty. He was also regarded as the father of Chinese history.

He learned from Kong Anguo and Dong Zhongshu in his early years. Under the guidance of his father Sima Tan, he learned to practising calligraphy[kə'liɡrəfi], write and read. At the age of ten, he could read and recite ancient Chinese books such as Shangshu, Zuo Zhuan, Guoyu, and Xiben(it also called Shibei).

In 125 BC, he travel around the China world at the age of 20 to learn about customs and collect some stories of the ancients passed down through the people.

In 120 B.C., he went away as a messenger and supervisor to what is now the south-west of China, taking on the task of building prefecture.

In 110 B.C., his father died. On his deathbed, he asked Sima Qian to compile[kəm'paɪl] and record the history of his ancestors so that future generations could learn about them. With tears in his eyes, Sima Qian agreed.

In 108 B.C., Sima Qian was appointed the court historian.

In 104 BC, when he was 41 years old, Sima Qian, Tang Du, Luo Xiahong and others jointly established the "Taichu Calendar" used January as the first month, which changed the habit of the "Zhuanxu Calendar" used in the Qin Dynasty to use October as the first month of the year. Thus laid the foundation of the calendar for the next two thousand years. In the same year, Sima Qian began to organize the documents and materials obtained from the compilation, to record the achievements of wise Kings, meritorious officials, the aristocratic families, and the virtuous gentlemen, and to inherit his father's last words.

In 99 or 98 BC, he defended Li Ling's surrender to the Xiongnu and was sentenced to death by the emperor Wudi. In order to fulfill his father's will, he chose the terrible punishment(gong xing) instead death. Then he continued to work hard to complete his historical work.

However, according to the Records of the Han Dynasty, Yang Yun, Sima Qian's grandson, published the Records of the Historian publicly, and was later beheaded by Emperor Xuandi of the Han Dynasty. Sima Qian's Records of the Historian was forbidden during the Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period, and officials and civilians were not allowed to read it freely, even the princes had no right to do so. Many emperors had criticized Sima Qian for slandering Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty. In addition, some articles recording Emperors might been tampered['tæmpəd] with. Because in ancient times, most of historiographer who was beside the emperor became to some extent a service person who publicized['pʌblɪsaɪzd] the positive image of the emperor.

Sima Qian, with the great cognition of history that evaluated as“究天人之際，通古今之變，成一家之言”，created China's first biographical [ˌbaɪəˈgræfɪkl] general history, Shiji (formerly known as Taishi Gongshu), which is recognized as a model of Chinese history books. This book records a history of more than 3000 years from the legendary Huangdi period in ancient times to the fourth year of the early days of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. He created a new style of historical records called "紀傳體", which centered on biographies of people and described the historical facts at that time.

Shiji(*the Records of the Historian*) is quite extensive. At that time, the Shiben, Guoyu, Qinji, Chuhan Spring and Autumn Annals, hundreds of works of various schools of thought, national documents and archives, as well as materials obtained from field surveys, were important sources of materials for Sima Qian to write the Shiji. Sima Qian was very strict. He made a careful analysis and selection of the materials he collected and eliminated some nonsense. Therefore, *the Records of the Historian* has a detailed and rich record. It is the first of the "Twenty Four Histories", and is praised by Lu Xun as "史家之絕唱，無韻之離騷".

I like Sima Qian, I have read the Shiji and also fascinated[ˈfæsɪnertɪd] by many characters, such as Wei Qing and Huo Qubing, who fought in the battlefield; Wu Taibo, who abdicate the throne and gave way to younger brother, and Su Qin, who was able to lobby all the Vassals in the Warring States Period. Many interesting History writtern by him. Admittedly, what fascinates me more is Sima Qian's confidence and sense of mission. He once said: “先人有言：‘自周公卒五百歲而有孔子。孔子卒後至於今五百歲，有能紹明世，正易傳，繼春秋，本詩書禮樂之際？’意在斯乎！意在斯乎！小子何敢讓焉。” I think it is precisely [prɪˈsaɪsli] because he has read many classics and histories since he was a child, and has accumulated a profound literary foundation under the influence of his father. At the same time, when he was 20 years old, he was able to travel around bravely. This is exactly the practice of the ancient Chinese saying, "Read thousands of books and travel thousands of miles"! He also saw the joy and suffering of the people, understood the needs of the people, and realized how important historical records are for future generations. Because history can let later generations understand the thoughts and practices of ancient sages, and learn from them and draw lessons.

That is all for my report today, I know there are many shortcomings, and much of the information is based on historical books and the research of others on the Internet. If there are any errors you found, please feel free to point them out. Thank you!