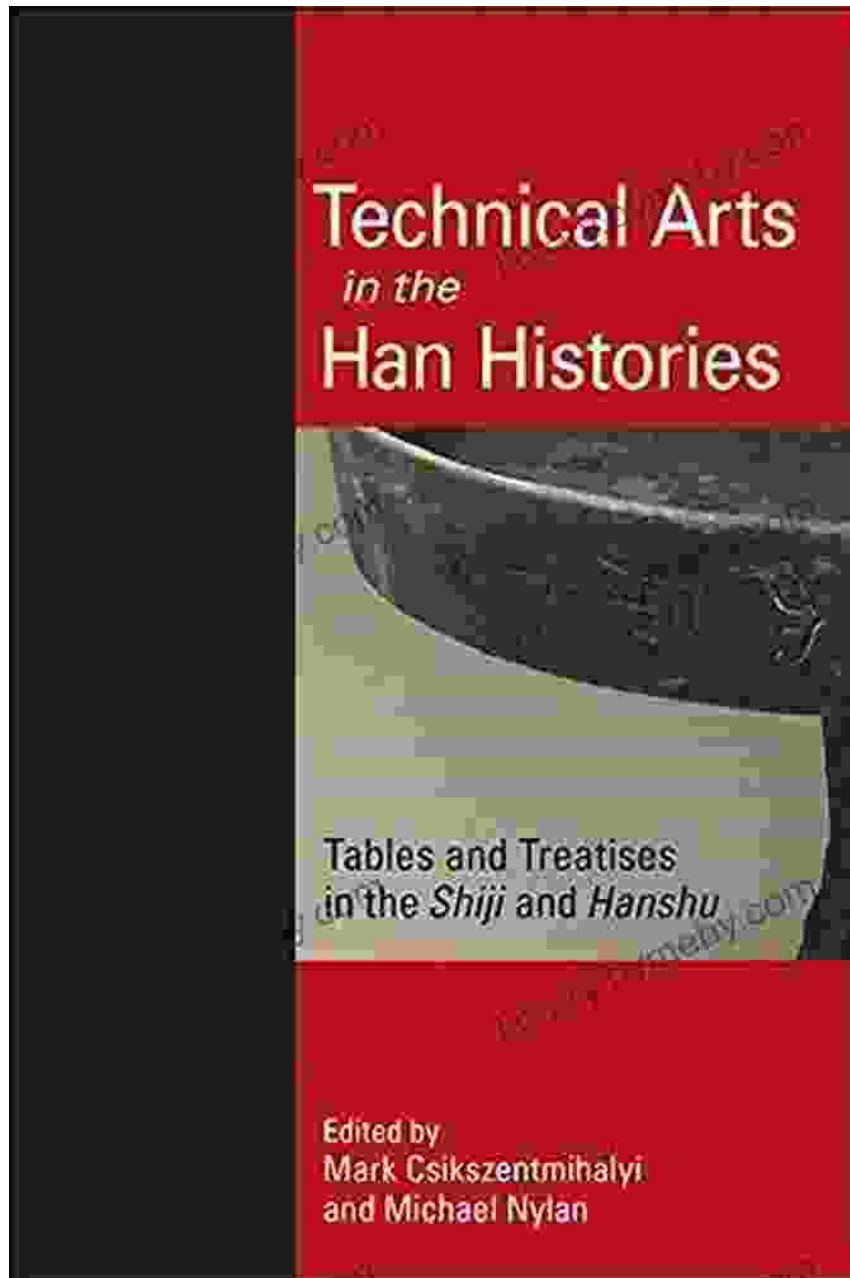
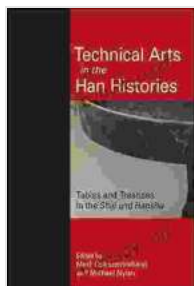


Tables and Treatises in the Shiji and Hanshu: A Gateway to Ancient Chinese Historiography



In the vast tapestry of Chinese literature, the *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian) and the *Hanshu* (History of the Han Dynasty) stand as towering monuments of historiography. These monumental works, compiled by Sima

Qian and Ban Gu respectively, provide a comprehensive account of Chinese history from its mythical origins to the early Han Dynasty.



Technical Arts in the Han Histories: Tables and Treatises in the Shiji and Hanshu (SUNY series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture) by Mark Csikszentmihalyi

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 9850 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 575 pages



Unveiling the Tables and Treatises

Beyond the captivating narratives that form the backbone of these texts lies a hidden treasure: the Tables and Treatises. These specialized sections, often overlooked by casual readers, offer a unique window into the meticulous methodology and comprehensive scope of ancient Chinese historiography.

The Tables, also known as Chronology (Shibiao), present a tabular summary of key events arranged chronologically. These tables provide a bird's-eye view of the rise and fall of dynasties, the succession of emperors, and the major milestones in Chinese history. By condensing vast amounts of information into a concise format, the Tables serve as an invaluable tool for understanding the flow of events and identifying major turning points.

The Treatises, on the other hand, explore specific topics in greater depth. They delve into subjects as diverse as astronomy, geography, economics, and social institutions. Unlike the narrative sections, which focus on individual rulers and their deeds, the Treatises offer a more systematic and analytical approach to Chinese history. They provide insights into the underlying trends, structures, and ideas that shaped the development of Chinese civilization.

Exploring the Shiji Tables and Treatises

Sima Qian's Shiji, completed around 94 BC, is the earliest comprehensive history of China. Its Tables and Treatises cover a vast period from the legendary Xia Dynasty to the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty.

The Shiji's Tables are particularly notable for their detailed chronology. Sima Qian took great care in reconciling conflicting accounts and establishing a consistent timeline. He also introduced the concept of "Basic Annals" (Benji), which present a year-by-year account of the reigns of individual emperors.

The Shiji's Treatises are equally impressive. They cover a wide range of topics, including the history of music, the calendar, and the feudal system. Of particular note is the "Treatise on the Five Elements" (Wuxingzhi), which explores the cyclical nature of Chinese history and the influence of the elements on human affairs.

Unveiling the Hanshu Tables and Treatises

Built upon the foundation laid by the Shiji, Ban Gu's Hanshu, completed around 111 AD, chronicled the history of the Han Dynasty from its establishment to the reign of Emperor An of the Eastern Han Dynasty.

The Hanshu's Tables continue the tradition of meticulous chronology established by Sima Qian. They provide a comprehensive overview of the Han Dynasty, including the reigns of its emperors, major military campaigns, and significant events.

The Hanshu's Treatises delve even deeper into specific topics than the Shiji's. They cover subjects such as agriculture, water management, and foreign relations. Of particular interest is the "Treatise on Astronomy" (Tianwenzhi), which reflects the advanced astronomical knowledge of the Han Dynasty.

The Significance of Tables and Treatises

The Tables and Treatises in the Shiji and Hanshu are not mere appendices but integral parts of these monumental works. They play a crucial role in providing a comprehensive understanding of Chinese history.

- **Chronological Framework:** The Tables provide an indispensable chronological framework for understanding the vast span of Chinese history, from its legendary beginnings to the Han Dynasty.
- **In-Depth Analysis:** The Treatises offer in-depth analysis of specific topics, revealing the underlying structures, patterns, and ideas that shaped Chinese civilization.
- **Methodological Insights:** The Tables and Treatises showcase the rigorous methodology and meticulous research employed by ancient Chinese historians, demonstrating the high standards of historiography.

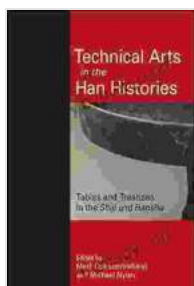
A Legacy for the Ages

The Tables and Treatises in the Shiji and Hanshu have had a profound impact on Chinese historiography and continue to be consulted by scholars and historians today. They provide an invaluable window into the minds of ancient Chinese historians and offer a glimpse of the richness and complexity of Chinese civilization.

For those seeking a deeper understanding of Chinese history and culture, the Tables and Treatises in the Shiji and Hanshu are an indispensable resource. They offer a unique and fascinating perspective on the annals of one of the world's oldest and most enduring civilizations.

Recommended Reading:

- Sima Qian, "Records of the Grand Historian" (Shiji)
- Ban Gu, "History of the Han Dynasty" (Hanshu)
- Denis C. Twitchett (ed.), "The Cambridge History of China: Volume 1, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.-A.D. 220"



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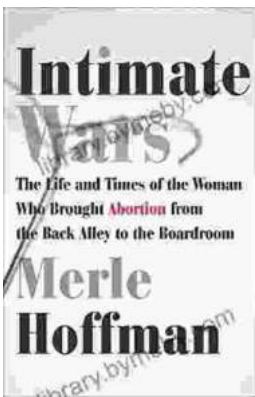
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