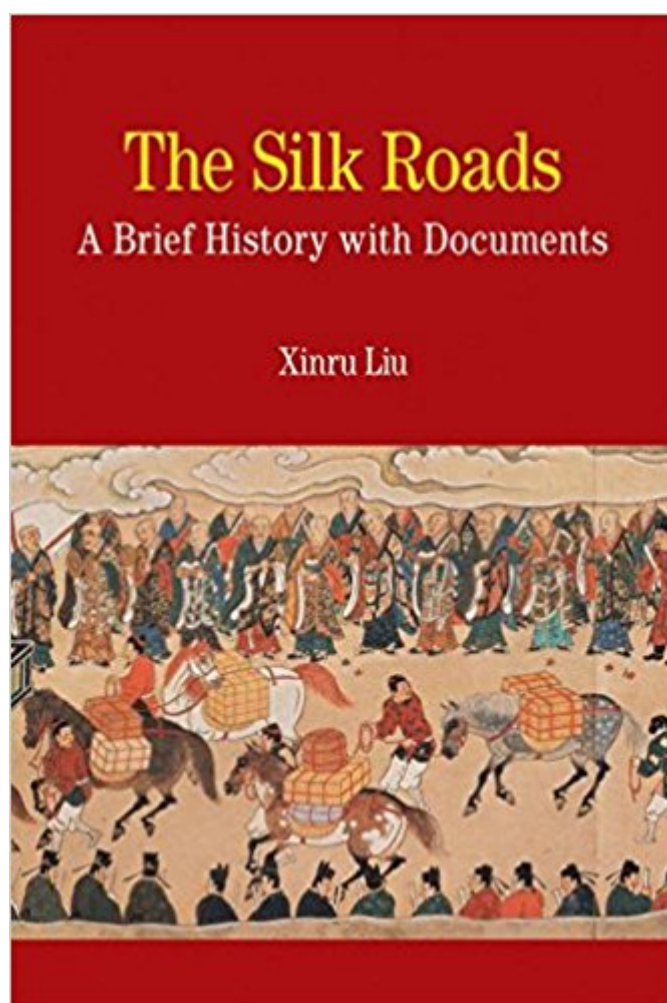


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The Silk Roads: A Brief History With Documents (Bedford Series In History & Culture)



Synopsis

For more than 1500 years, across more than 4000 miles, the Silk Roads connected East and West. These overland trails and sea lanes carried not only silks, but also cotton textiles, dyes, horses, incense, spices, gems, glass, and ceramics along with religious ideas, governing customs, and technology. For this book, Xinru Liu has assembled primary sources from ancient China, India, Central Asia, Rome and the Mediterranean, and the Islamic world, many of them difficult to access and some translated into English for the first time. Court histories, geographies and philosophical treatises, letters, travelers' accounts, inventories, inscriptions, laws, religious texts, and more, introduce students to the complexities of cultural exchange. Liu's thoughtful introduction considers the many ways the peoples along the Silk Roads interacted and helps students understand the implications for economies and societies, as well as political and religious institutions, over space and time. Maps, document headnotes and annotations, a chronology, questions for consideration, and a selected bibliography offer additional pedagogical support.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'What is very helpful about Liu's collection is that it combines a well-organized, concise overview of the pre-modern Silk Road with documents from all across ancient Eurasia, instead of just China or the Greco-Roman world. The new translations of individuals' letters from the Tarim Basin area are quite cool.' - Shoshana Keller, Hamilton College, USA

Xinru Liu (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania) teaches world history, the history of South Asia, and the history of Central Asia at the College of New Jersey in Ewing. She is associated with the Chinese Academy of Sciences Institute of History and Institute of World History. Among her many publications are *The Silk Road in World History; Connections Across Eurasia: Transportation, Communications, and Cultural Exchange on the Silk Roads* with Lynda Norene Shaffer; *Silk and Religion: An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People in A.D. 600-1200*; and *Ancient India and Ancient China*."

Well-written, informative, interesting (see note on Documents) and as-advertised. The book is arranged in a peculiar manner, with a 30-page Introduction, followed by 130 pages of Documents relating to the Silk Road(s) (English translations largely from primary sources), and ending with several pages of a sort of bullet-point chronology, plus bibliography, acknowledgements and index. Unlike several other books, (notably "Empires of the Silk Road", Beckwith), Ms. Liu includes the later littoral sea-trading-routes in the subject, which makes the entire book both greater in breadth and slighter in detail. Regardless, and regardless of whether you agree with her choice, it is a fine introduction to the trade, products, practices, religions and individual experiences over all of the routes between what is now called Europe to the far ends of Asia; a good place for those unfamiliar with the subject to begin. The translated documents which follow are almost bound to give you a bit of a shiver from time to time. These are from the hand of he (mostly) who wrote it lo, those many years ago, right in front of you: [Contract for the Sale of a Vineyard] "This document concerning a vineyard [bought] from Budhila and Budhaya {...} This is the seal of the monks Samca, Sujata and Dhamila" (3rd century). These are people we would call uncivilized, self-organizing trade among themselves, and finding ways to make record of it to avoid later misunderstanding. Where history and increasing prosperity cross. The Chronology begs for additions, but judging by other sources, is not lacking for accuracy. Overall, Ms. Liu (probably as a result of her Chinese heritage) focuses on the east end of the road more than do others, and that is just fine; for most western readers, that end needs some fleshing out. The questions at the end of the introduction of each Document suggest the book is aimed at those who might not be reading this by choice, but that probably can't be helped. And it wouldn't hurt to be 200 pages longer, but I'll be buying more of her books to make up for it. Finally, I almost cut a star; my copy arrived with water damage at the bottom of the first 50 pages. Can't do it; the book is too good and too well written.

College book pick by college professor I had to get. With short articles

Great insight on history. Used a great deal for my history course, easy to read as well.

Packed with rich historical details.

A very succinct, unelaborated, uncritical run-on encapsulation of Silk Roads history, with an array of translated excerpts from disparate ancient sources, for survey classes. This little book tantalizes; it makes one wish it had been developed into a full-fledged book, with well-reasoned arguments in place of terse assertions, and with references and sources fully integrated with the text.

This wonderful collection of ancient India's primary sources is a delight to any scholars collection. Many letters from the Jewish community and other cultural documents.

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