

The first historian from the Western Han Dynasty, Sima Qian, wrote the *Historical Records or Shi Ji*. It is here that the earliest known accounts of Qin Shi Huangdi's mausoleum are carefully recorded. Included are the details of his burial, his coffin being encased in a bronze sarcophagus floating on a river of mercury within the burial chamber. Sima Qian describes vaulted ceilings covered with constellations of the night sky representing the center of the earth. He further describes how the first emperor's death remained secret for as long as possible to avoid confusion and upheaval in the empire.