

中國兵馬俑： 秦始皇時代的瑰寶

China's Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor's Legacy

QIN, BEGINNING WITH AN INSIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TERRITORY,
REACHED THE POWER OF A GREAT STATE AND FOR A HUNDRED YEARS
MADE ALL THE OTHER GREAT LORDS PAY HOMAGE TO IT.

Jia Yi (201–169 BCE), Han dynasty poet and statesman

By the time Zheng, the future First Emperor, was born in 259 BCE, the state of Qin (pronounced CHIN) was already nearly six centuries old. It was waging war with neighboring states for supremacy at the same time Rome was battling Carthage for the upper hand in the Mediterranean. Qin, like Rome, would ultimately prevail. Under the leadership of Qin Shihuang, or First Emperor of Qin, China's seven warring states were unified as one nation for the first time.

The works of art in this exhibition trace the tumultuous rise of Qin from a regional power of humble origins to a superpower and illuminate the political, economic, and cultural reforms that, along with the terracotta warriors, remain today as the First Emperor's legacy.

秦始皇

Qin Shihuang, the First Emperor

THE UNIVERSE ENTIRE
IS OUR EMPEROR'S REALM,
EXTENDING WEST TO THE DESERT,
SOUTH TO WHERE THE HOUSES FACE NORTH,
EAST TO THE EAST OCEAN,
NORTH TO BEYOND TAHSIA,
WHEREVER HUMAN LIFE IS FOUND,
ALL ACKNOWLEDGE HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

Imperial inscription on Mount Langya, 219 BCE

One of the most remarkable figures in China's long and spectacular history, Qin Shihuang (First Emperor of Qin) became king of the ambitious state of Qin in 246 BCE at the age of just thirteen. Over the next twenty-five years he defeated Qin's neighboring rival states, uniting them in a realm that established China much as we know it today.

On ascending the throne, the young king also began planning for his death, beginning the construction of a tomb of grand proportions and extraordinary richness that would ensure his passage to and comfort in the afterlife. His obsessive quest for immortality led him to commission a tomb on a scale never seen before or since. Sealed beneath an imposing mound in the shadow of Mount Li, the emperor's tomb forms the heart of a vast burial complex stretching over 22 square miles, which was known only through local legends until a chance discovery by farmers digging a well in 1974.

邁向帝國之路

From State to Empire

QIN [IS] GREEDY, VIOLENT, KEEN FOR PROFIT, AND UNTRUSTWORTHY.
IT KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT TRADITIONAL ETIQUETTE,
PROPER RELATIONS, AND VIRTUOUS CONDUCT.
IF IT SEES SOMETHING PROFITABLE BEFORE IT, JUST LIKE A WILD ANIMAL
IT WILL DISREGARD RELATIVES AND BROTHERS.

Xu Jia, courtier of the state of Wei, 275 BCE

When the relatively stable Western Zhou dynasty (c. 1046–771 BCE) came to an end, China fell into five centuries of conflict as a number of states competed for power. The origins of the state of Qin lay in the remote, far western regions of China, in present-day Gansu province. Protected by natural barriers and with a well-disciplined military, Qin gradually expanded eastward into the fertile plains of the Wei and Yellow river valleys.

The fortunes of the Qin changed dramatically during the mid-4th century BCE. Sweeping political and administrative reforms introduced by the brilliant, visionary, and ruthless statesman Shang Yang and his follower Han Feizi turned the state of Qin into a formidable force. Through a series of brutal military victories and shrewd diplomatic maneuvers over the next century, Qin gained territory and power.

The works of art in this gallery and part of the next date from the Spring and Autumn (770–476 BCE) and Warring States (475–221 BCE) periods, when the Qin state's rise to power accelerated, culminating in the unification of China under the First Emperor in 221 BCE.

秦始皇之崛起

Rise of the First Emperor

GREAT IS THE VIRTUE OF OUR EMPEROR WHO PACIFIES ALL FOUR CORNERS
OF THE EARTH, WHO PUNISHES TRAITORS, ROOTS OUT EVIL MEN,
AND WHO WITH PROFITABLE MEASURES BRINGS PROSPERITY.

Imperial inscription on Mount Langya, 219 BCE

In 259 BCE, the king and queen of Qin welcomed their first son. They called him Zheng, meaning “upright.” Zheng’s father died after reigning just three years, and Zheng ascended the throne at the age of thirteen. His mother and the prime minister served as regents for the young king. When he turned twenty-one, Zheng took control and set out to conquer the neighboring states of Han, Zhao, Wei, Chu, Yan, and Qi. By 221 BCE he had annexed them all and within the year proclaimed himself Qin Shihuang, the First Emperor of Qin.

秦始皇之治

The First Emperor's Rule

THE EMPEROR, NEVER HEARING HIS FAULTS CONDEMNED,
IS GROWING PROUDER AND PROUDER WHILE THOSE BELOW CRINGE IN FEAR
AND TRY TO PLEASE HIM WITH FLATTERY AND LIES.

Qin necromancers Housheng and Lusheng
(*Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian, 89 BCE*)

The First Emperor was ruthless in his ambition to control and reform his empire. He instituted sweeping political, economic, and social reforms to establish order and bring the new territories under his direct control. He undertook a series of inspection tours “to show his might and pacify the realm.” He erected monuments extolling his achievements and made sacrifices to gain favor with heaven and the immortals. He also imposed harsh punishments, even death, on intellectuals and others who spoke in opposition to his administration.

In 210 BCE, the First Emperor set out for the south and east coasts on what would be his final imperial inspection tour. When he reached Shaqiu (in present-day Hebei province), he became gravely ill and died. Fearing an uprising, the prime minister, Li Si, went to great lengths to keep the emperor's death secret. Over the following weeks, as the body was carried back to the capital, imperial orders were issued as usual. Carts of rotting fish escorted the emperor's carriage to mask the smell of the decomposing body. Two months later, the emperor was buried in his tomb in the shadow of Mount Li.

墓葬

Burial

THEY POURED MOLTEN COPPER AND BRONZE TO MAKE THE OUTER COFFIN,
AND THE TOMB WAS FILLED WITH MODELS OF PALACES, PAVILIONS,
AND OFFICES AS WELL AS FINE VESSELS, PRECIOUS STONES, AND RARITIES.

Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian, 89 BCE

Guarded by his terracotta army, the First Emperor was buried in his tomb at the foot of Mount Li in the ninth month of 210 BCE. The treasures that accompanied him into the tomb for his life in the next world are described in the colorful *Records of the Grand Historian*. To deter thieves, automated crossbows were installed so that anyone entering the tomb would be shot. For fear the artisans “might disclose all the treasure that was in the tomb, . . . after the burial and sealing up of the treasures, the middle gate was shut and the outer gate closed to imprison all the artisans and laborers, so that not one came out.”

About three-quarters of a mile east of the tomb, the terracotta army was deployed to guard the “spirit road” leading to the tomb entry. However, during rebellions in 206 BCE, the pits containing this formidable array of soldiers were set on fire; excavation has revealed scorched timbers and terracotta fragments.

兵馬俑

Terracotta Army

AS SOON AS THE FIRST EMPEROR BECAME KING OF QIN, EXCAVATIONS AND BUILDING STARTED AT MOUNT LI, AND AFTER HE WON THE EMPIRE MORE THAN 700,000 CONSCRIPTS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY WORKED THERE.

Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian, 89 BCE

The First Emperor began the planning and construction of his vast burial city soon after he became king at age thirteen.

The tomb itself is described at length in ancient texts and is marked by a high mound, but the terracotta army remained unknown, with no mention in historical records or visibility in the landscape. Its chance discovery in 1974 took the world by surprise.

In sheer numbers and scale, the terracotta army is a remarkable achievement. Artistically and technically it stands alone in the arts of China. As the ritual bronzes and other works in this exhibition show, Chinese art of earlier times had a largely ceremonial function and was ornamented with symbolic geometric or animal-inspired patterns and motifs. With the terracotta army, the First Emperor's intent was to replicate the real world in his afterlife. Such realism was revolutionary, starting a new tradition that was to flourish in the Han and Tang dynasties that followed, though never on the same grand scale.

不朽之追求

Quest for Immortality

THE NECROMANCER LUSHENG REPORTED TO THE EMPEROR, "OUR SEARCH FOR MAGIC FUNGUS, RARE HERBS, AND IMMORTALS HAS COME TO NOTHING."

Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian, 89 BCE

By the time of the First Emperor, belief in immortality was long established in Chinese culture. Since the Bronze Age, funeral ceremonies had been held to ensure the welfare of the deceased in the next world. The Chinese believed that preserving the body and providing the comforts and protections of earthly life would give immortality to the soul. They also believed that their ancestors continued to influence the affairs of the living; honoring the deceased was a constant concern.

The First Emperor was legendary for his obsession with his own afterlife. Believing himself the mediator between heaven and earth, he sought herbs and elixirs of immortality. He journeyed to the summits of the great sacred mountains to be close to the immortals and performed rituals to gain their favor. Nowhere was his quest for immortality more powerfully expressed than in his tomb.

永恒之都

Eternal City

ALL THE COUNTRY'S RIVERS . . . WERE REPRODUCED IN QUICKSILVER
AND BY SOME MECHANICAL MEANS MADE TO FLOW INTO A MINIATURE OCEAN.
THE HEAVENLY CONSTELLATIONS WERE SHOWN ABOVE
AND THE REGION OF THE EARTH BELOW.

Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian, 89 BCE

The First Emperor's tomb chamber remains hidden to this day under its burial mound at the foot of Mount Li. Still to be excavated, the tomb is said to contain an underground palace, with all the amenities and activities of palace life represented. Like the palaces and plan of his capital city, Xianyang, it also mirrors the celestial realm. Excavations of the surrounding area have revealed a complex of offices, reception halls, stables, sacrificial pits, an armory, and even an imperial zoo. There are life-size figures of officials, acrobats, musicians, animals, and birds, some of which are on display in this room.

Also buried with the emperor were a number of his palace officials, concubines, and others, to serve him in eternity.

尾聲

Epilogue

QIN, BEGINNING WITH AN INSIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TERRITORY,
REACHED THE POWER OF A GREAT STATE AND FOR A HUNDRED YEARS
MADE ALL THE OTHER GREAT LORDS PAY HOMAGE TO IT. YET AFTER IT HAD BECOME
MASTER OF THE WHOLE EMPIRE . . . ITS RULER DIED BY THE HANDS OF MEN . . . WHY?
BECAUSE IT HAD FAILED TO RULE WITH HUMANITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND TO REALIZE THAT THE POWER TO ATTACK
AND THE POWER TO RETAIN WHAT ONE HAD THEREBY WON,
ARE NOT THE SAME.

Jia Yi (201–169 BCE), Han dynasty poet and statesman

Following the First Emperor's death in 210 BCE, his advisers conspired to hand the throne to his second son, Huhai. They forced the suicide of the emperor's eldest son, Fusu, and proclaimed Huhai the rightful heir. Huhai's reign was brief (210–207 BCE), and the Third Emperor's was even shorter. Weakened by a rising tide of rebellion against the Qin empire, the capital Xianyang was seized by a rebel army led by Liu Bang in 206 BCE. The next dynasty, the Han, began in 206 BCE.