



Terracotta Warriors

秦始皇兵马俑
永恒的守卫

GUARDIANS *of*
IMMORTALITY ■

Edited by
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The Terracotta Army and the Mausoleum of the First Emperor of Qin

ZHANG WEIXING 張衛星

TRANSLATED BY DUNCAN M CAMPBELL

In the spring of 1974, the Terracotta Army was discovered quite by chance. In March that year, the people of Xiyang Village sank a large well on a slope in the northern foothills of Mount Li in order to irrigate their fields. While doing so, having excavated through layer after layer of jumbled earth mixed with stones and sand, they came across shards of baked red clay. Although the shards were hard, the villagers dug on, hoping to go deeper. Once they were past the baked red clay, however, rather than finding a layer of pure loess soil as they had expected, they encountered piece after piece of what they thought were the remains of a tutelary god, the Lord of the Earthenware Pitcher (*Waguanye* 瓦罐爺).

What they had actually uncovered were pieces of the Terracotta Army. At a depth of some 5 metres, they found a number of bronze objects along with pieces of pottery, piled up on a surface of Qin-era bricks. The villagers had lived in this area for many generations, but as the site was a good 2 kilometres away from

the large and sealed earthworks of the First Emperor's Mausoleum 秦始皇陵, they had no way of knowing that the objects they had stumbled on were important artefacts associated with that mausoleum. The pieces of the terracotta soldiers were then reassembled by the late Mr Zhao Kangmin 趙康民, an expert with the Lintong Museum, and the news was later conveyed to the top leadership in Beijing by the reporter Lin Anwen 蔣安穩.

As early as 1960, when the state authorities had determined that the First Emperor's Mausoleum would be included in the first list of Major Historical and Cultural Sites to be Protected at the National Level, the Committee of the Bureau for the Management of Cultural Artefacts of Shaanxi Province had organised a team of experts to undertake the first scientific archaeological work conducted on the mausoleum. Although this work was not particularly productive a number of important sites were uncovered, and a plan of the sites of the core area of the mausoleum drawn up.



Paradise and home

TRANSITIONS TO THE AFTERLIFE

NATHAN WOOLLEY

After the formation of an empire ruled as a single bureaucratic system, the First Emperor turned to a realm he was yet to conquer. In his *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi ji* 史記) Sima Qian details the First Emperor's attempts to attain an elixir of immortality in the final years of his rule. As a sign of his ambitions, he proclaimed himself a 'perfected man', a divine being unharmed by fire or water and able to live as long as Heaven and Earth. He sent youths out by boat to seek a purported Isle of Immortality beyond the eastern seas, and even visited the coast himself in the hope of finding clues to the route to this land. He also sent ministers in pursuit of famed immortals to learn their secrets.

Perhaps fortunately for the people of the empire, the First Emperor's efforts would go unrewarded, for only those who forgo worldly achievement can ascend to immortality without passing through death; the two men commissioned to find the elixir came to this conclusion, and fled rather than face punishment for failure; and those sent to sea returned

empty-handed. In Sima Qian's work, these attempts stand now as condemnation of the First Emperor, not only to the ultimate folly of such an endeavour, but also as a symbol of the excesses of his rule. Such misguided attempts to extend one's years were to become a reoccurring trope of imperial hubris in later Chinese history.

Yet the grandiosity of the emperor's tomb represented an alternative attempt to escape the finality of death and extend his achievements into the otherworld. In describing the emperor's tomb, Sima Qian's history tells of the construction of a microcosm under the earth, with heavenly bodies represented above and the landscape of the empire below. Representations of palaces and towers as well as officials of court were accompanied by all manner of wondrous objects. The reality of this description remains to be proven since the tomb itself remains unexcavated, but modern archaeology has revealed other subterranean treasures in the immediate vicinity, as is now well known: an army of warriors as well as numerous officials



4. Three-legged cauldron (Ding)
三足带盖小鼎 / 三足带盖小鼎

Spring and Autumn period (771–475 BCE)
Bronze, 6.5 x 6cm
Collected in 2001
Fengxiang County Museum, 总1003

This small, refined vessel decorated with incised motifs of fish, birds and tigers differs from typical bronzes of the period. It was possibly made by a neighbouring state and acquired by the Qin as booty.



5. Three-legged cauldron (Ding)
带盖铜鼎 / 带盖铜鼎

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)
Bronze, 27 x 27.8cm
Excavated at Juanling, Shanyang,
Shangluo, 1998
Shangluo City Museum, 总0710 D198

6. Three-legged cauldron (Ding) with inscriptions
成山铜鼎 / 成山铜鼎

Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE)
Bronze, 17 x 19.5cm
Collected in 1975
Fengxiang County Museum, 总0080



7. Tureen (Gui) with lid
错金银青铜簋 / 错金银青铜簋

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)
Bronze, inlaid with gold and silver,
15.5 x 19.2cm
Mizhi County Museum, 0001

During the Warring States period, the Bronze Age was coming to an end. Other materials, such as colourful lacquer-work, began to challenge the status of bronze. Craftsmen responded by creating ever-more luxurious bronze vessels, such as this tureen, inlaying them with decorative features in gold and silver.

JADE

Throughout China's history, jade has been highly esteemed. Its material qualities – hardness and durability, as well as its subtle intensity and colour – were aligned with symbolic qualities of purity, strength, nobility and integrity.

Jade was worked at least 7000 years ago. It is an extremely hard material, and cannot be carved, but must be abraded with tools. The introduction of iron tools, in around 650 BCE, enabled craftsmen to create increasingly intricate decorative styles. Consequently, the most accomplished jade, both aesthetically and technically, was produced during the Warring States period.

From the Zhou through the Han dynasties, tombs of high-ranking nobles have been found

to contain copious amounts of jade, often covering the body from the neck to the knees, or, in the case of the Han dynasty, completely encasing the body in jade suits. This practice was driven by a belief in the ability of jade to both symbolically and physically protect the body from decay.

The Chinese teacher, and sometimes minister and thinker, Confucius (551–479 BCE) extolled the virtues of jade, especially as it related to the qualities of an ideal *junzi* 君子 (gentleman). For example, Confucius likened the warmth of jade to a gentleman's humanity; its durability to his wisdom; its internal radiance to his trustworthiness; and as symbols of rank and authority, to his virtue.

38. Jade and agate pendant 组玉佩 / 组玉佩

Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 BCE)

Jade and agate, 56 x 30cm

Excavated at Qiangjia village, Fufeng, 1981

Zhouyuan Museum, Baoji City, 1587–1618

Elaborate pendant sets such as this, made from jade ornaments strung together with agate beads, were worn hung from the waist or shoulders by high-ranking individuals. The sound of tinkling that accompanied the wearing of such pendants both regulated the wearer's pace and kept evil thoughts at bay.





94. Unarmoured general
战袍将军俑 / 戰袍將軍俑

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Pottery, height 196cm

Excavated from Pit 1, Qin Shihuang tomb complex, 1976

Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, 000852

In contrast to the armoured general, the unarmoured general wears a scarf and loose robes that are secured around his waist by a belt and buckle. The folds of the cloth are carefully rendered and incised with details to suggest texture.



97. Kneeling archer
彩绘跪射俑 / 彩繪跪射俑

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Pottery, height 120cm

Excavated from Pit 2, Qin Shihuang tomb complex, 1999

Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, 002812

The kneeling and standing archers come exclusively from Pit 2. Positioned at the forefront of the force, they were the primary defence line, intended to protect the cavalry forces and chariots. The kneeling archer is equipped with body and

shoulder armour, and would have held a crossbow in his hands. The degree of detail extends to the tread on his shoe, the ribbons holding his armour together and a unique plaited hairstyle.

The kneeling archers also have much surviving pigment, indicating that they, like all of the warriors, were originally painted in vivid colours. Their faces and hands were painted to approximate flesh, and their robes and armour were enlivened by colouring with mineral pigments such as cinnabar (red), azurite (blue), malachite (green), bone white, and a colour known as 'Han purple', produced from barium copper silicate.





101. Chariot horse
车马 / 車馬

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)
Pottery, 171 x 217cm
Excavated from Pit 2, Qin Shihuang tomb complex, 1977
Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, 002767

102. Chariot horse
车马 / 車馬

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)
Pottery, 166 x 193cm
Excavated from Pit 1, Qin Shihuang tomb complex, 1977
Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, 002548

Both real and terracotta horses accompanied the First Emperor into the afterlife. Although these terracotta horses are from two different pits, they are both chariot horses, and would have been hitched, four across, to chariots by wooden yokes fixed to a crossbar. The chariots and fittings, being made from wood, have long since disintegrated, with only traces and occasionally impressions of them still remaining.

The horses' tails are carefully plaited and tied up to keep them free of the harnessing, and their mouths are open to accommodate the bit. The hole in the side of the horse is an air vent to ensure even firing of the interior and exterior, and to prevent cracking of the hollow body.