

LIFE AND AFTERLIFE IN EARLY IMPERIAL CHINA

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THE FIRST EMPEROR: CHINA'S TERRACOTTA ARMY, THE HIGH MUSEUM OF ART, ATLANTA, 16 NOVEMBER 2008–19 APRIL 2009, curated by Jane Portal.

THE FIRST EMPEROR: CHINA'S TERRACOTTA ARMY, edited by Jane Portal, with the assistance of Hiromi Kinoshita. Pp. 240, figs. 201, map 1. High Museum of Art, Atlanta 2008. \$45 (cloth); \$35 (paper). ISBN 978-1932543254 (cloth); 978-1932543261 (paper).

The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army focuses on Emperor Qin Shihuang and the grand empire he created during his rule from 221 to 210 B.C.E. The exhibition at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, originally shown in a larger version at the British Museum in 2007/2008, displays about 100 objects, primarily from the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.E.), and examines them within their historical and archaeological contexts to reassess the legacy of China's First Emperor and investigate the life and thought of his time.¹ About half of the loans are from

the Museum of the Terracotta Warriors² in Lintong County, Shaanxi Province, which was built at the site of the First Emperor's tomb in 1979. The remaining loans are from nine other museums in Shaanxi Province and the British Museum. This is not the first time that terracotta warriors have been shown in the United States;³ however, the current exhibition is the first one completely devoted to the First Emperor and the Qin dynasty. The exhibition is accompanied by a handsomely produced catalogue with contributions by leading western scholars and prominent Chinese curators who have been involved with these works since their discovery.⁴

Before the 1970s, our knowledge of the Qin dynasty was mostly derived from historical texts, many of which are incomplete, biased, or even altered. The spectacular works of the Qin dynasty, recovered by means of archaeological excavations during the last 35 years at Lintong, a county about 40 km east of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, constitute a reliable new source that fundamentally transforms our understanding of this critical phase of early China.

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¹Under the title *Terracotta Warriors: Guardians of China's First Emperor*, this exhibition has additional U.S. venues at the Houston Museum of Natural Science (18 May–25 September 2009) and at the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C. (19 November 2009–31 March 2010).

²This review employs the museum's commonly used name rather than the "Museum of the Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Emperor Qin Shihuang" employed in Portal 2008.

³Earlier exhibitions, listed under their first venue, include: *The Great Bronze Age of China* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1980), *China 5000 Years: Innovation and Transformation in the Arts* (Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1998), and *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1999–2000).

⁴Save for a different cover and a foreword by the High Museum's director, the exhibition catalogue is essentially the same as the British Museum's original version (Portal 2007). Its list of catalogue entries therefore does not indicate the differences in content of the smaller Atlanta venue, making the volume somewhat difficult to use for exhibition visitors.

THE LEGACY OF THE FIRST EMPEROR

The exhibition's installation, which progresses from the legacy of the First Emperor's life to the one associated with his death, is divided into four galleries, each organized around a different overarching theme. The first gallery introduces his lifetime achievements. Its display is arranged in a generous space that allows the use of freestanding cases. Here, weapons (including a reconstructed crossbow and arrows and a bronze sword) and signal bells imply the military prowess of the Qin,⁵ while items such as ritual vessels and money manifest the political and cultural achievements of Qin in the history of China.⁶ An imposing wall panel reproduces an enlarged rubbing from a 10th-century stone stele of an archaic Qin inscription that commemorates one of the five historic inspection tours the emperor made after he had unified the country, emulating the legendary sage kings who ruled the universe.⁷ This reliable 10th-century copy of the lost original records the emperor's accomplishment of "eliminating the six brutal powers" and "unifying [all that is] under heaven."

Qin, named after the feoff it received from a king of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 B.C.E.), had rather humble beginnings. When it first appeared in China's political arena in the ninth century B.C.E., Qin was a minor state in the distant west, far away from the traditional heartland, where China's first political state, the Shang dynasty, arose in the mid second millennium B.C.E. Qin gradually expanded its territories, moving its capital eastward, as it continuously fended off attacks from nomadic neighbors in the north and west. In the late fifth century B.C.E., Qin began to adopt radical changes in its legal, political, military, and social institutions that transformed it into a dominant force among the rivaling states. By introducing a system of ranks achieved by merit and advanced military technology, Qin

built an effective army with which its last king, who became the First Emperor, eliminated all adversaries and established the Qin dynasty.

The new central government of Qin introduced a standard set of weights and measures to replace the different series of units used by the separate states. Qin cast in bronze and distributed a large quantity of its own standard units, which are exemplified by the heavy bronze weight in the first gallery (fig. 1).⁸ Its inscription records two edicts issued respectively by the First and Second Emperors to enforce use of the standard as well as to document the bronze's own weight, its date and place of manufacture, and the officials and workers involved in its production. A nearby case contains different currencies in various shapes used by the states before their conquest and also features the modest-looking Qin coin, a small circular disk with a square hole, which became the normal form of money for all successive dynasties until the beginning of the 20th century.⁹ The standardization of coinage resulted in economic convenience and enabled the effective running of a centralized government. The implementation of a standard script was an even more important innovation. The Chinese writing system, invented before 1200 B.C.E., had become particularly complex by the beginning of the Qin dynasty. Variations and inconsistencies among scripts posed an obstacle to communication among the agencies of the new government. The Qin-reformed standard script, which paved the way for the further development of Chinese writing, contributed significantly to political and cultural unification.¹⁰ In fact, the most lasting legacy of Qin was the establishment of a unified country with a centralized government as a cultural ideal. China has largely remained united for the roughly 2,000 years since Qin, though it has occasionally suffered periods of division caused by internal or external forces.

⁵ E.g., Portal 2008, 42, fig. 29; 43, figs. 31, 33; 49, fig. 41; 210, no. 11; 211, nos. 13, 22 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. nos. 002565, 002811).

⁶ E.g., Portal 2008, 77, fig. 67; 80–2, figs. 69–74; 213, no. 40 (Lintong County Museum, inv. no. 01966); 213–14, nos. 41–54.

⁷ Portal 2008, 108, fig. 113; 221, no. 134 (London, British Museum, inv. no. 2007,3002.1); the 10th-century C.E. stele is in Xi'an, Forest of Steles Muse-

um (Kern, "Imperial Tours and Mountain Inscriptions" [Portal 2008, 106–13]).

⁸ Portal 2008, 75, fig. 65; 213, no. 38 (Xi'an, Shaanxi Provincial History Museum, inv. no. 65).

⁹ E.g., Portal 2008, 80–2, figs. 69–73; 213–14, nos. 42–53. For the Qin coin, see Portal 2008, 82, fig. 74; 214, no. 54 (London, British Museum, inv. no. 1981,1216,48).

¹⁰ Twitchett and Loewe 1986, 57.

QIN ARCHITECTURE

Unfortunately, all the architectural grandeur of the Qin is gone. Qin buildings, constructed with perishable wood and earth, have not survived aboveground. Although poets and artists had fantasized for some 2,000 years about the splendid palaces at Xianyang, the Qin capital, their visions were derived from a handful of historical sources. According to the biography of the First Emperor by Sima Qian, the official historian of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), the First Emperor built hundreds of temples and palaces in and near Xianyang.¹¹ Each time he conquered a state, he would order the construction of a new palace in the form of the one from the defeated state.¹² The layout of his palaces in alignment with the constellations of the Royal Chamber and Heavenly Apex, where the King of Heaven was thought to reside, symbolized that Qin ruled both heaven and earth. His most magnificent architectural extravaganza was the Epang Palace, built in a hunting park at the foot of Mount Li, south of the capital. This massive complex consisted of numerous palaces connected by covered walks, one of which extended over the Wei River as a link to the palaces in Xianyang.¹³ Thanks to modern archaeological excavations, we are finally able to gain a sense of the shape and scale of Xianyang and its palatial buildings. The exhibition's second gallery focuses on the spectacular now-lost Qin architecture, which it evokes for visitors by augmenting excavated architectural fragments with a modern architectural model of a palace at the Qin capital, a wall panel reproducing an early 18th-century imperial court painting of the Epang Palace, and a large photograph mural of another depicting a fantasy land that the emperor dreamed of visiting.

The site of ancient Xianyang (ca. 15 km east of modern Xianyang City) is on an elevated plain at the foot of Jiuzong Mountain. Xianyang was established as the capital in 350 B.C.E., when the Qin royal house moved farther to the east. By the time the First Emperor unified the country, Xianyang had already



Fig. 1. Qin bronze weight, ht. 17.2 cm, 244 B.C.E. Xi'an, Shaanxi Provincial History Museum, inv. no. 65 (Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Center; courtesy High Museum of Art).

grown into a sizable city.¹⁴ During approximately the last half-century, archaeologists have found 33 major architectural remains, plus pottery workshops, bronze and iron foundries, brick and tile factories, and armories in an area roughly 50 km².¹⁵ The largest architectural complex, which measures about 900 x 570 m and comprises eight major buildings, is believed to be the Xianyang Palace of the First Emperor. The main building, originally 117 x 45 m, was in a squat U shape composed of two identical multistoried wings with many halls joined by stairways, corridors, and open balconies. The floors of the rooms were either constructed with straw-tempered clay or paved with square clay bricks, some of which had pressed surface patterns. The steps of the corridors were built with large hollow bricks embellished with geometric designs and fantastic beasts. Two superb examples, each measuring about 118 x 39 cm, are on display.¹⁶ One of these is engraved in fluent lines with a spirited dragon, whose sinuous body writhes around a large ritual jade disk (fig. 2). There are also pottery roof tile ends,¹⁷ some of which bear the palaces' names, while others have molded floral or animal designs. The exquisite modern

¹¹ *Shiji*, juan 6, 256.

¹² *Shiji*, juan 6, 239.

¹³ *Shiji*, juan 6, 256.

¹⁴ Shaanxi 2004, 9–12, 708–9.

¹⁵ Shaanxi 2004, 709–13.

¹⁶ Portal 2008, 85, fig. 80; 215, nos. 57, 58 (Xian-

yang Municipal Museum, inv. nos. 14-758, 005444).

¹⁷ Portal 2008, 88, fig. 86; 91, fig. 88; 215, no. 62; 216, no. 75 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. nos. 002974, 002973).



Fig. 2. Qin hollow pottery brick with engraved dragon design, lgth. 119 cm, ca. 221–206 B.C.E. Xianyang, Xianyang Municipal Museum, inv. no. 005444 (Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Center; courtesy High Museum of Art).

wooden model of the west wing of Xianyang Palace, showing its three stories and two-tiered roofs, is based on archaeological finds as well as on representations of architecture from Qin wall paintings and engraved stones.¹⁸

THE TERRACOTTA ARMY

The third gallery, devoted to striking archaeological finds from the First Emperor's tomb at Lintong, Shaanxi, is the highlight of the exhibition. Eight life-sized terracotta sculptures of warriors and modern replicas of two half-life-sized bronze sculptures of horse-drawn chariots are installed at the center of the room (fig. 3). The sculptures are placed on long platforms that enable visitors to view them from every angle. This gallery's walls are painted black and punctuated at the entrance and exit by enlarged ancient Chinese texts in red print. The combination of these two bold colors, possibly inspired by the art of Qin lacquer,¹⁹ bestows the display space with an awe-inspiring solemnity, while a large photograph mural of a burial pit at the far end of the gallery gives the impression of the terracotta army continuing its march in endless rows.

Although the terracotta warriors are now world famous, few people know that their initial discovery was completely accidental. In the spring of 1974, a group of farmers digging for water in a field near their village in Lintong County—about 1.5 km from the tomb

of the First Emperor—came upon fragments of life-sized terracotta figures.²⁰ A team of archaeologists was dispatched from the Shaanxi Provincial Archaeological Institute to investigate the discovery. Controlled excavations soon uncovered a large burial pit about 230 m long by 62 m wide and 4.5 to 6.5 m deep, in which about 6,000 life-sized terracotta figures of soldiers and horses plus remains of wooden chariots were detected. During the following two years, archaeologists found two more burial pits. The total surface area of the three pits is more than 200,000 m², and the total number of terracotta sculptures belonging to the pits is close to 8,000.²¹

The burial pits themselves are sophisticated constructions. Their ground and wall surfaces have been reinforced with thick layers of rammed earth as hard as concrete. Ten embankments, also built with rammed earth, run lengthwise through each of the three pits, dividing the space of each into 11 corridors. The corridors' floors are paved with bricks and their walls lined with wooden beams and posts. On the basis of fragments on the pits' floors, archaeologists believe that the embankments and posts of each pit once held a huge ceiling of wooden beams topped by reed mats that were covered with layers of earth.²²

The approximately 6,000 terracotta figures in pit 1, the largest of the three pits, are believed to represent the central Qin army, comprised

¹⁸ Tao Fu 2004. The preserved Qin wall paintings from palace corridors that depict architecture are not in the exhibition (Kinoshita, "On Palaces and Architecture" [Portal 2008, 86, fig. 78]; see also Shaanxi 2004, 714–20).

¹⁹ *Infra* n. 31.

²⁰ Yuan 1990, 64.

²¹ Yuan 2002, 277–83.

²² Yuan 2002, 229–32.



Fig. 3. Installation view of Qin terracotta warriors and replicas of bronze chariots, ht. of warriors 184–195 cm, ht. of chariots 106 cm, 152 cm, ca. 221–206 B.C.E. Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. nos. 001, 002817, 002830, 002747, 002763, 000850, T22G9.11, 02778, 003160 (M. Jensen; courtesy High Museum of Art).

of foot soldiers, armored officers, and four-horse chariots, in formation as if on the battlefield.²³ Pit 2, an L-shaped earth construction of 6,000 m² to the northeast of pit 1, houses a cavalry consisting of 108 armored riders standing in front of their horses, a battalion of 64 four-horse chariots, each containing three charioteers, a battalion of 300 archers and foot soldiers, and a large combined unit of about 300 charioteers, cavalry, and foot soldiers. Pit 3, the smallest one, is believed to represent the army's headquarters; it contains one chariot at the center plus 68 officers and foot soldiers standing at attention with their backs toward the pit's walls.

To date, more than 1,900 sculptures have been recovered, and thus most of the approximately 8,000 sculptures still remain untouched underground in the three pits. The excavated sculptures of soldiers fall into three major categories: infantry, cavalry, and

charioteers. The infantry can be further divided into subcategories, including officers of high, middle, and low rank, light-armed and heavily armored foot soldiers, and standing and kneeling archers. The eight warriors on display have been carefully selected from pits 1 and 2 so that each one represents a different type (see fig. 3). They have been arranged in rows to evoke the original organization of terracotta warriors in the pits. An armored infantryman, wearing a knee-high tunic and body armor, and a light infantryman, wearing a tunic without armor, stand in the first row.²⁴ Behind them are a senior officer and a standing archer.²⁵ The officer, with three ribbons on his chest signifying his rank, wears long, beribboned armor and a tall, double-tailed headdress. The men in the third row are also officers: an unarmored senior officer with a tall, double-tailed headdress and a low-ranking charioteer officer in an armored tunic.²⁶ The last row contains a chariot driver

²³ Yuan 2002, 232–38.

²⁴ Portal 2008, 62, fig. 49; 155, fig. 158; 220, no. 113; 212, no. 26 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. nos. 02778, 000850).

²⁵ Portal 2008, 42, fig. 28; 142, fig. 149; 220, no.

112; 210, no. 10 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. nos. 002817, 002830).

²⁶ Portal 2008, 72, fig. 61; 141, fig. 147; 213, no. 35; 219, no. 110 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. nos. 002747, T22G9.11).

and a cavalryman with his horse.²⁷ While the driver is equipped with long armor for maximum protection, the cavalryman wears short, light armor, providing mobility for riding and shooting arrows. Each of the eight soldiers has a different face and body type, and their hairdos, mustaches, and/or beards likewise vary from one another.

The thousands of individualized terracotta sculptures resulted from a mass-production process. Arms, hands, and heads were made in molds as separate modules, which were then joined with the feet and torso. In the final steps before firing, clay was applied to the surface of the sculptures so that artists could model the faces and hairdos individually. Other body parts, costumes, and armor were also reworked individually. The finished warrior sculptures were thus made to look as diverse as a real army composed of human beings. A modern miniature model of a Qin sculpture workshop, displayed in the warriors' gallery, vividly illustrates the process of their manufacture.²⁸ Archaeologists have yet to locate the kilns where the terracotta sculptures were fired, but the more than 80 workshop and craftsmen's names stamped or engraved on the sculptures suggest that a large number of workshops must have been involved.²⁹

Today the sculptures are either gray or reddish—the colors of the terracotta itself; however, they were originally painted in bright colors. The warriors' faces were pale yellow or pink flesh colors, and their robes and trousers red, green, blue, purple, or black. The borders of the armor on senior officers bore colorful, intricate geometric patterns, which faithfully copied contemporary textiles. Chemical analysis has revealed the painting process, which employed many mineral colors, including cinnabar, azurite, and malachite,³⁰ applied on top of a layer of lacquer.³¹ The several conserved examples

of sculpture with preserved pigments are too fragile to travel. But a detailed color illustration helps the exhibition visitor visualize the warriors' original colorful appearance.

The two modern replicas of half-life-sized bronze chariots in the third gallery are nearly as striking as the terracotta warriors (see fig. 3). The originals were found in 1980, in a wooden chamber alongside a burial pit at the west end of the emperor's tomb mound.³² When found, each chariot was broken into more than 1,000 pieces. Conservators worked for two years to restore them to their original splendor, but the chariots are too fragile to travel, and, hence, painstakingly produced replicas are displayed in the exhibition. The bronze chariots were naturalistically painted, and these replicas even show the remaining pigments.

The first one depicts a light chariot, also known as the tall chariot, which is drawn by four smartly trimmed and elaborately caparisoned horses.³³ The driver rides in a standing posture under a large, round umbrellalike canopy. The second four-horse chariot has a rectangular car with movable windows and covered by an oval canopy.³⁴ The driver sits in front before this chariot's large and deep car, in which passengers may either sit or sleep. This second vehicle was possibly the kind of carriage in which the First Emperor rode when he toured the country. Qin craftsmen significantly improved the design of the chariot, which had been introduced from western Asia in the second millennium B.C.E.³⁵

THE FUTURE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE FIRST EMPEROR'S TOMB

In the exhibition's fourth and last gallery, a new chapter begins about the investigation of the First Emperor's tomb, or, in other words, his grand underground empire. As the wall panels state, this final section is devoted to "Recent

²⁷ Portal 2008, 40, fig. 25; 44, fig. 35; 210, no. 7; 211, no. 17 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. nos. 001, 002763). For the horse, see Portal 2008, 51, fig. 42; 212, no. 23 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. no. 003160).

²⁸ Portal 2008, 158, fig. 162; 220, no. 115 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors).

²⁹ Yuan 2002, 263–67.

³⁰ Thieme and Emmerling 2001.

³¹ Chinese lacquer comes from the sap of the lacquer tree (*Rhus verniciflua*), which, when cured, becomes a protective, plastic material. Lacquer

formed a glossy ground on unpainted areas of the warriors, such as hair and armor. It probably also sealed the porous clay surface before the application of water-based pigments; see also Thieme and Emmerling 2001, 339–43.

³² Museum of the Terracotta Warriors 1998, 6–13.

³³ Portal 2008, 37, fig. 23 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors).

³⁴ Portal 2008, 38, fig. 24; 210, no. 6 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors).

³⁵ Loewe and Shaughnessy 1999, 202–8.

Discoveries" and "The Future of the Tomb."³⁶ The 10 recent finds displayed here are at least as fascinating as the terracotta warriors.

The limestone armor on display is one of 87 suits that were unearthed from a storage pit during a trial excavation in 1999.³⁷ This restored suit of armor consists of 612 limestone plates laced together by flat copper strips. It is 74 cm long, 128 cm around the waist, and weighs 18 kg. The stone armor, which is too heavy to have been worn, must have been intended for protection against evil spirits in the afterlife. Scholars believe that the stone armor represents actual contemporaneous armor made either entirely of leather or of a combination of leather and iron, like the examples recovered by archaeology.³⁸

The bronze water birds on display, a swimming swan and a standing crane with a fish in its beak (fig. 4), are two of the 46 life-sized bronze birds—20 swans, 20 geese, and 6 cranes—that were found in 2000 within an underground structure in the shape of a riverbank inside a burial pit (K0007).³⁹ The birds are rendered with such remarkably realistic details that specialists have been able to identify their species. And they, too, were originally naturalistically painted.

Eleven life-sized terracotta sculptures of sitting or kneeling musicians were found in a tunnel in the same pit. The positions of their hands suggest that they once held musical instruments that have not survived. The musicians wear similar costumes, but their faces are highly individualized. Two are on display.⁴⁰ According to Duan Qingbo ("Entertainment for the Afterlife" [201]), the pit containing the musicians and birds (K0007) probably represented an office of the Qin court that "provided tame birds for musical performances for the emperor."

The most impressive of the more recent finds is the terracotta sculpture of a strong-

man, possibly a weight lifter (fig. 5), which was found with 10 other life-sized figures in a burial pit (K9901) near the emperor's tomb in 1999.⁴¹ These standing human figures wear only short skirts, so that their realistically modeled torsos are bare. The wrestler, with brawny muscles and a protruding stomach, is the most remarkable of all.

The monumental terracotta sculptures—particularly examples that, like the strongman, display astonishingly realistic anatomical features—pique the intellectual curiosity of art historians. The technology for making such figures was readily available to the Chinese, who had already been producing complex, precise ceramic molds to cast bronze for more than 1,000 years. But lifelike, life-sized sculptures of human beings were unknown in early Chinese cultures.

Where did the inspiration for such sculptures come from? Although suggestions about cultural diffusion currently tend to be scorned and are often dismissed, these faithfully represented Chinese human figures nonetheless persistently remind us of the art of ancient Persia and the Hellenistic world. Evidence from archaeology suggests that early in the ninth century B.C.E., the Qin state already had contact with the West.⁴² Their nomadic neighbors on the steppes were an active conduit for China's exchange with Central and western Asia and ultimately with Europe.⁴³ As we have seen, nomads were responsible for the introduction of chariots and, most probably, also for the earliest import of a variety of jade (nephrite) from the Tarim Basin. Recently, archaeologists have found glass beads in a late fourth-century B.C.E. Qin tomb, which they have identified as a western import.⁴⁴ Even more surprising is the presence at the same site of a blue-glazed (perhaps faience) beaker, which is unmistakably of ancient Mediterranean origin.⁴⁵ More evidence will be needed

³⁶ The headings on the wall panels are in both Chinese and English; however, the Chinese translations in some of the panels could be improved.

³⁷ Portal 2008, 180, fig. 183; 221, no. 126 (Xi'an, Shaanxi Provincial Archaeological Institute, inv. no. 006484).

³⁸ Yuan 2002, 166–71.

³⁹ Portal 2008, 193, fig. 195; 202–3, fig. 201; 221, no. 130 (Xi'an, Shaanxi Provincial Archaeological Institute, inv. no. K0007T3:27), no. 133 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. no. DM:012). For the excavation report, see Shaanxi 2007,

161–73.

⁴⁰ Portal 2008, 198–200, figs. 199, 200; 210, no. 3; 221, no. 132 (Xi'an, Shaanxi Provincial Archaeological Institute, inv. nos. 006481, 006482).

⁴¹ Portal 2008, 156, fig. 160, no. 114 (Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. no. DM:005 [K9901T1G3-5]; see also Yuan 2002, 179–97).

⁴² Han Wei 1996, 4–11.

⁴³ Bunker 2002; see also Boardman 1994.

⁴⁴ Gansu 2008, 26–7, figs. 19, 61, nos. 12, 24.

⁴⁵ Gansu 2008, 17, 27, fig. 19, no. 12.



Fig. 4. Qin bronze crane with fish in beak, ht. 75 cm, ca. 221–206 B.C.E. Lintong, Museum of the Terracotta Warriors, inv. no. DM: 012 (Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Center; courtesy High Museum of Art).

to resolve complex issues of cross-cultural influence. However, given the vigorous pace of fieldwork and rapid advances in research, the outlook for major future discoveries in Chinese archaeology looks bright.

As spectacular as they are, the works on display represent only a small fraction of the numerous discoveries archaeologists have made over the last 35 years in the vicinity of the First Emperor's tomb. Extensive excavations and surveys have revealed the tomb itself to be a massive complex that includes a central mound, which is a man-made hill 45 m high, surrounded by a large memorial hall, imperial kitchens for the preparation of sacrificial food, and numerous burial pits filled with a variety of offerings.⁴⁶ The walled tomb complex occupies a rectangular site with a surface area of 2.135 km². The tomb chamber, or so-called underground palace, lies beneath the earthen mound. Preliminary investigations have found the chamber's walls to be 460 m long and 392 m wide; its depth is speculated to be between

20 and 30 m. Tests of earth under the mound indicate that it contains an extraordinarily high level of mercury (Duan Qingbo, "Scientific Studies of the High Level of Mercury in Qin Shihuangdi's Tomb" [204]). This appears to corroborate the description of the tomb by Sima Qian: "Mercury was used to fashion the hundreds of rivers, the Yellow River and the Yangtze, and the seas in such a way that they flowed."⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

This exhibition is a remarkable presentation of one of the most important archaeological discoveries made in China during the last half-century. The extraordinary works on display—tangible evidence of the existence, achievements, and vision of the First Emperor—tell his story more vividly than written sources. Anyone interested in history, archaeology, art, or architecture should see this show. The visitor will come away with an eye-opening, up-to-date knowledge and understanding of early

⁴⁶See Shaanxi 2000, 1–13; Yuan 2002, 20–38.

⁴⁷*Shiji*, juan 6, 265.

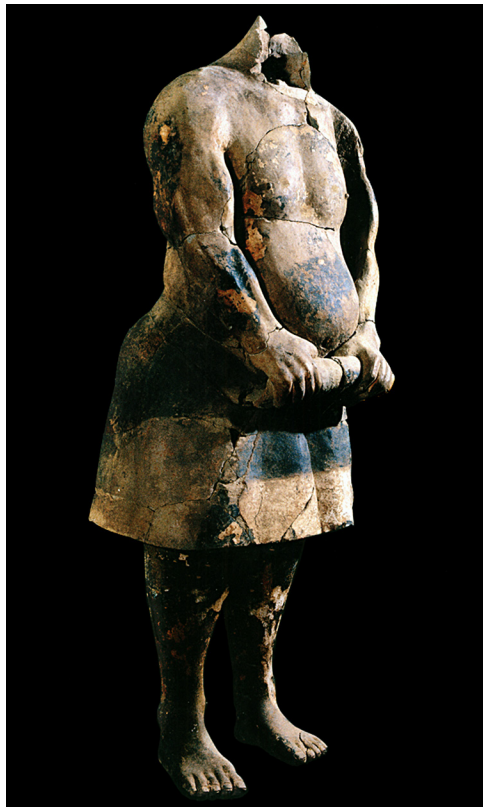


Fig.5. Qin terracotta strongman, ht. 171 cm, ca. 221–206 B.C.E. Lintong, Museum of Terracotta Warriors, inv. no. DM: 005 (Xia Juxian and Gao Yuan; courtesy High Museum of Art).

China and thus of the formation of perhaps the greatest culture in the world.

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