



FACTSHEET

# CHINA'S TERRACOTTA ARMY

ÖSTASIATISKAMUSEET

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## Exhibition in the Rock Galleries beneath the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities

28 August 2010 - 16 January 2011

### UNIQUE EXHIBITION

China's Terracotta Army is a unique exhibition in an equally unique setting, telling the story of how China came into being and how this mighty empire was built upon the idea of eternal power in time and space. This way of thinking was shaped through monumental burial areas and buildings, uniting China and creating a sophisticated empire which lasted for more than two thousand years: the Middle Kingdom. The exhibition focuses on the Qin and Han dynasties from 221 BC to 220 AD, and includes a total of 325 artefacts from eleven museums, five imperial grave sites and more than ten different burial sites in Shaanxi Province. It showcases representative finds from these major burial sites, and illustrates the latest research findings. None of the artefacts have ever been displayed in Sweden before, and the Han Dynasty artefacts have only previously been exhibited in a few locations in Europe. The exhibition has two themes: the unification of the great empire, and life after death for the emperors and their families.

### SENSATIONAL DISCOVERIES

The exhibition focuses on two of the most sensational archaeological discoveries in China in recent decades, which have cast new light on an important period in history when China was founded. These are the discovery in 1974 of the now world-famous terracotta soldiers and other finds from the grave of the first emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi (221-210 BC), with its approximately 8,000 terracotta soldiers excavated in Lintong near Xi'an in the province of Shaanxi, and the grave of Emperor Jingdi and Empress Wang, which was also discovered close to Xi'an. Jingdi was the fourth emperor of Western Han, the dynasty that succeeded Qin, and was buried at Han Yang Ling Mausoleum, which was built between 153 and 128 BC. The excavations began in the mid-1980s, and more than 10,000 terracotta figures have been excavated to date.

### THE FIRST EMPEROR OF QIN

Qin Shi Huangdi, the First Emperor of Qin, ruled from 221 to 210 BC, and unified six large Chinese states into a single state. He introduced joint laws for the empire, and standardised measurements, weights and currency. He reformed the written language, bringing a single way of writing to the entire empire. He also joined together and strengthened older defences alongside the empire's northern and western borders, forming the Great Wall of China.



## THE TERRACOTTA ARMY

It took 700,000 men and almost 40 years to complete Qin Shi Huangdi's burial site. In 1974, farmers digging a well discovered some earthenware soldiers buried deep beneath the ground. Archaeologists found three pits containing a huge army of life-sized soldiers, horses and the remains of chariots. An empty fourth pit was also discovered. The earthenware soldiers are between 180 and 197 cm high depending on their rank, with the high-ranking generals being the tallest.



Around a thousand warriors from the mighty army have been restored. Each

has its own individual features. The bodies were mass-produced, and were partly assembled by hand. Just like Greek sculptures, the soldiers were once painted in bright colours. The paint flaked away when the figures were exposed to light and air on excavation. The soldiers were dressed in armour, armed with real weapons and arranged in combat formation. This was an army prepared for battle, ready to defend the dead emperor.

## IMMORTALITY AND ETERNITY

The magnificent underground burial chamber created by the emperor was intended to be his palace in the afterlife, as well as a permanent place in the universe. His palace, his court and his army would follow him into eternity. The aim was to strive for a long life and an eternal existence. Not only did the ancient Chinese try to ensure that there would be a life after death, they also tried to find a magical elixir to achieve immortality. The First Emperor therefore sent out young men and women into the desolate South China Sea to seek out the mystical islands of Penglai, where the immortals were thought to live. Incense burners in the shape of mountains depicted these imaginary islands, and small figures with long cloaks represented the immortals themselves. When the Chinese made bronze objects that represented the immortals and their mountains, it is thought that this was in the hope and belief that these objects would tempt the immortals to come and visit the owners of such fine items. To this day, the imperial graves of the Qin and Han dynasties represent one of the most sensational chapters in world history. In this respect, the first Chinese emperors could be said to have achieved immortality after all.

## THE HAN DYNASTY IS ESTABLISHED

Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi was succeeded by his second son, but the country soon fell victim to uprising and civil war. Stability was restored when the new Han Dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD) was established, leading to a lasting unification of China. The Han emperors continued Qin's principle of gathering the state around a semi-divine ruler who would be the source of all wealth, esteem and influence.

## HAN YANGLING-EMPEROR JINGDI'S GRAVE

The Han Dynasty took over the burial ground from Qin, but the warriors and servants were now produced in a completely different and considerably smaller size. Sacred and ceremonial objects made from precious materials and jade have been dug up, together with thousands of miniature terracotta figures. Some of these figures are lively representations of imperial soldiers, servants, musicians and acrobats, while others are imitations of objects relating to everyday life and obtaining food supplies.

In Emperor Jingdi's grave, close to the Han Dynasty capital of Chang'an, now Xi'an, the figures were made from earthenware with textile or leather clothing and wooden arms. Since these were perishable materials, only the naked bodies have survived without their magnificent costumes. As well as soldiers, servants, concubines and eunuchs, the burial items also include a variety of domestic animals such as dogs, pigs, sheep and goats. The excavation of Han Yang Ling, where more than 10,000 figures have been uncovered, is one of China's most significant new archaeological discoveries.



## THE GENERAL FROM YANGJIAWAN

In 1965, a total of 2,500 painted earthenware figures were found in a Han Dynasty grave in the town of Yangjiawan. These figures depicted soldiers, musicians, dancers and servants. It is thought that the grave belonged to the famous general Zhou Bo (who died in 169 BC) and his son Zhou Yafu (who died in 143 BC). This army is the first of its type to be excavated, and the figures have given us valuable information about costumes, weapons, fighting formations and military strategies during the Han Dynasty.

## WESTERN ASIAN TRADITIONS

The Han Dynasty strived to expand its territory, which grew with each military expedition. For centuries, there was a mutual influence and exchange of goods between the Chinese and the nomads and the pastoral people of Mongolia and Central Asia. When the First Emperor and the Emperor of the Han Dynasty renewed the burial ground, the changes can be traced to encounters with the Greek, Roman and Persian empires to the west. The inspiration for the life-sized terracotta soldiers may have come from Central Asia and Iran, along with Emperor Qin's interest in long inscriptions on the sides of mountains and stone for protective purposes in the form of armaments. We do not yet know whether Western Asian traditions played a part in the development of the First Emperor's grave, or how these might have reached Qin's court if so.



## THE ROCK GALLERIES

China's Terracotta Army is being displayed in the Rock Galleries beneath the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, on Skeppsholmen in Stockholm. These impressive galleries consist of an extensive network of tunnels that were originally a military defence constructed in 1939-40 to be used during the Second World War. Up until the 1960s, they formed part of the Swedish Navy's headquarters. These tunnels are the perfect subterranean setting for the exhibition. Here, an archaeological environment with a unique atmosphere can be created for these objects that were originally not intended to be seen by any living person, having instead been made for the grave. The exhibition offers a unique opportunity to come face to face with the First Emperor's terracotta soldiers in the Rock Galleries, now being used for a major exhibition for the first time ever.



## CATALOGUE

**A lavishly-illustrated 192-page catalogue has been produced for the exhibition.**

## **LOANS FROM ELEVEN MUSEUMS IN SHAANXI PROVINCE:**

Museum of Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Qin Shihuang

Han Yangling Museum

Shaanxi Archaeology Institute

Shaanxi History Museum

Xi'an Museum

Xianyang Museum

Maoling Museum

Lintong Museum

Long Xian County Museum

Fengxiang County Museum

Suide County Museum

## **BOOKING AND TIMES**

### **Time**

The exhibition is open Monday-Sunday from 28 August 2010 until 16 January 2011. Admission is on the hour from 10 AM until 8 PM. Groups must book tickets in advance.

### **Booking**

To buy and book tickets: [bokning@ostasiatiska.se](mailto:bokning@ostasiatiska.se)

### **Prices**

Ticket price 150 SEK per person

Entrance is free for those aged under 19 (identification may be required).

### **More information**

See [www.ostasiatiska.se](http://www.ostasiatiska.se)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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## PARTNERS

**This exhibition was organized by the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in partnership with the State Administration of Cultural Heritage and Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau as well as the Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Centre, People's Republic of China.**



State Administration of cultural heritage  
Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau  
Shaanxi cultural Heritage Promotion Center

