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Bo bell

秦公鑄

Spring and Autumn period,
Duke Wu's reign (697–678 BCE)

Bronze

Baoji Bronze Museum

Percussion instruments played a significant role in ceremonial rituals during China's Bronze Age. *Bo* are

distinguished from other bell types by their flamboyant, outward-projecting flanges. This bell is from a set of three *bo* discovered in the vicinity of Baoji, a region where an early Qin capital was located. It bears an inscription that documents the lineage of Qin dukes and legitimizes their rule.

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Yongzhong bell

秦公鐘

Spring and Autumn period,
Duke Wu's reign (697–678 BCE)

Bronze

Baoji Bronze Museum

Yongzhong, like *bo* bells, do not have clappers. They are sounded by striking. Each bell can produce two tones, one

when struck on the side and another if struck in the center. *Yongzhong* bells are characterized by a long stem at the top with a loop near the stem's base. This one, from a graduated set of five, is decorated with eighteen bosses arranged in three rows separated by stylized dragon designs.

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Covered *fanghu* square vessel

青銅蟠虺紋雙耳方壺

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

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***Ding* cauldron**

青銅蟠虺紋雙耳鼎

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

The *ding* food cauldron was the most prevalent ritual vessel in Bronze Age China. It was used to cook animal meat over a fire during ceremonies to honor ancestral spirits. During the Spring and Autumn period intricate animal motifs were favored, such as the interlacing serpentine pattern on this *ding*.

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***He* kettle**

青銅盃

***Pan* basin**

青銅盤

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

The *he* kettle and *pan* basin were commonly paired in ceremonies and also in burials. They were likely used for ritual hand washing performed before a ceremony.

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***Yan* steamer**

青銅甗

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

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***Yi* water vessel**

青銅匜

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Baoji Bronze Museum

Often paired with a *pan* basin, the *yi* was used as a water container in ritual ceremonies. The beautiful decoration and refined casting suggest that this *yi* belonged to an aristocrat, possibly the Duke of Qin or a member of his royal entourage.

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***Dou* food vessel**

蟠虺紋帶蓋青銅豆

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Baoji Bronze Museum

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Fanghu square vessel

青銅方壺

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Covered *ding* cauldrons

青銅帶蓋小圓鼎

八獸帶蓋四足小銅鼎

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Fengxiang County Museum

Their exuberant animal-motif decoration suggests that these *ding* may not have been made in Qin, where more subtle decoration was preferred during the Spring and Autumn period.

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Mirror

青銅蟠虺紋鏡

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Fengxiang County Museum

It was common practice in Qin and other states to bury mirrors with the deceased as protective talismans.

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Hu vessel

青銅“安邑下官鍾”

Warring States period (475–221 BCE), Wei state

Bronze

Xianyang Municipal Museum

This *hu* has two inscriptions on its belly. The first identifies the vessel as owned by the city of Anyi, in the Wei state. Ownership later passed to the Han state,

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where officials noticed a discrepancy between the required and actual capacity and added a second inscription. Eventually, the *hu* ended up in the hands of Qin aristocrats, who added an inscription along the mouth ring to indicate the Qin standard capacity. The history of this *hu* is evidence of the cultural exchanges occurring in the 3rd century BCE.

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***Ding* cauldron**

青銅鼎

Warring States period, dated 309–308 BCE

Bronze

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

This elegant *ding* food cauldron is typical of the Warring States style. It is smaller and plainer than the Spring and Autumn

period *ding* in the previous gallery and has three loops on its domed lid. The inscription on the underside indicates that this vessel was made in the neighboring state of Zongshan. It was probably acquired by Qin soldiers as booty during the war of unification.

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***He* kettle with phoenix-shaped spout**

青銅鳳流盃

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Xi'an Municipal Museum

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***He* kettle with dragon-shaped spout**

青銅龍流盃

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Fengxiang County Museum

During the Warring States period, a new type of tripod *he* kettle—with a round mouth and lid and bulging belly—became popular in Qin, eventually replacing the flat-bodied *he* entirely. Spouts resembling a phoenix and a dragon and handles in the form of stylized animals enliven these two ritual bronze vessels:

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***Yan* steamer**

青銅甗

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Fengxiang County Museum

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***Chunyu* percussion instrument**

青銅淳于

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Xianyang Municipal Museum

The *chunyu* is in the form of an upside-down vase with a dragon-shaped handle. Triangular “hanging blades” encircle the foot and shoulder, and intertwined serpents embellish the body.

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***Ping* vase with garlic-shaped head**

青銅蒜頭瓶

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Xianyang Municipal Museum

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***Bianhu* vessel with garlic-shaped mouth**

青銅蒜頭扁壺

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Lintong County Museum

The Qin state is thought to have originated vessels with mouths shaped like heads of garlic. Each of these wine vessels has a mouth in the form of a six-clove garlic bulb.

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***Mou* vessel**

青銅斝

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Shaanxi Provincial History Museum

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Sword

青銅劍

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Baoji Bronze Museum

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Sword with jade pommel

玉劍首青銅劍

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze and jade

Fengxiang County Museum

These cast bronze swords are typical of swords used in Qin and other states before and during the Warring States period. Compared to the swords used later by Qin soldiers, as seen in the terracotta army, these have relatively short blades. The sword on the right is inscribed “Yin suowu yong” (for the use of Yin Suowu).

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Ge dagger-axe

青銅戈

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze

Shangluo Municipal Museum

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Axle head or end cap

青銅卷雲紋車轄

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

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Pair of axle end caps and linchpins

青銅蟠虺紋車軛

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

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Horse's face masks

青銅獸面紋當盧

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

Known as *danglu*, these ornaments were for chariot horses' foreheads. This pair represents horned animals with bulging eyes.

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Horse bells

青銅馬鈴鐺

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

These miniature bells—each with a clapper—were attached to a horse’s harness. Meander patterns decorate the inset panels formed by a central cross design.

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Horse bells

青銅馬鈴鐺

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

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Animal-face harness decoration

青銅獸面紋馬飾

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

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Harness buckles

銅帶扣

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Gilt bronze

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Sword with inlaid openwork hilt

金柄蟠虺紋鑲嵌寶石鐵劍

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Iron and gold with inlaid turquoise

Baoji Municipal Institute of Archaeology

One of the most significant finds of Qin gold objects is from a tomb excavated

in 1992 at Yimen village in Baoji, Shaanxi. This ceremonial sword is one of three with gold hilts discovered there. Its iron blade and gold hilt were cast separately and then joined with a rivet joint. The granulated background on the hilt shows stylistic influence from the nomadic peoples of the northern steppe.

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Animal-mask rosettes

獸面金方泡

Animal-face ornaments

金獸面紋泡飾

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Gold and precious stones

Baoji Municipal Institute of Archaeology

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Animal-shaped ornament

金獸

Duck-head buckles

鴨形金帶扣

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Gold

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

Baoji Municipal Institute of Archaeology

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Dragon-shaped buckle

龍型金帶扣

Duck-head belt hook

鴨形金帶扣

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Gold

Fengxiang County Museum

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Tiger

金狗

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Gold

Xi'an Municipal Museum

This gold tiger, which was cast from a mold, is vividly rendered with bared teeth, bulging eyes, and upright ears. Along its back is a horizontal bar through which a strap could be laced to attach it to other objects.

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Hu vessel

錯金銀寶石雲紋雙耳壺

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze with inlaid gold, silver, and precious stones

Baoji Bronze Museum

The innovative use of inlaid gold, silver, and precious stones (now mostly missing) to create dynamic patterns sets this wine vessel apart from other bronze *hu* of the same period.

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Bird-shaped finial

錯金銀鳥形秘冒

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze with inlaid gold and silver

Xi'an Municipal Museum

New technologies during the Warring States period allowed metals to be inlaid in bronze. Scrolling designs of inlaid silver adorn this elegant bronze bird, which recent archaeology suggests was a finial on a dagger handle.

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Belt hook

嵌貝銅帶鈎

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Gilt bronze with inlaid shell and precious stones

Xi'an Municipal Museum

From the quantity and variety of forms known today, it appears that belt hooks were extremely popular during the Warring States period. This one has inlaid shell ornamentation rather than the more common jade.

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**Bear-head harness button
or rosette**

熊頭鎏金銅馬飾

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Gilt bronze

Fengxiang County Museum

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Harness buttons or rosettes

流雲蟠虺紋鎏金銅馬飾

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Gilt bronze

Fengxiang County Museum

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Necklace

玉瑪瑙串飾

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Jade and agate

Longxian Museum

A style of jewelry with multiple jade pendants was introduced by Qin artisans of the Spring and Autumn period. This example is made up of five jade pendants and fourteen agate beads. The pendants are in the form of two shells, a horn-shaped *xi*, and two lively fish that appear to be leaping out of the water.

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Necklace

玉瑪瑙串飾

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Jade, agate, and shell

Longxian Museum

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Buckle in the shape of a stylized duck

鴨形玉帶扣

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Jade

Baoji Municipal Institute of Archaeology

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Circular pendant

蟠虺紋宮燈形鏤空玉佩

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Jade

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

The complex geometric design of this jade pendant is typical of Qin style. The mirror-image openwork carving represents the fused bodies of two dragons, each biting the other's tail.

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Strip-shaped *zhang* pendant

璋形玉佩

Triangle-shaped pendant

磬形玉佩

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Jade

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Painted *gui* vessel

彩繪陶蓋簋

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Painted *hu* vessel

彩繪陶獸面耳方壺

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)
or early Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Lonxian Museum

Beginning in the Spring and Autumn period, elaborately painted ceramic vessels became popular among the middle and lower classes as substitutes for costly ritual bronzes. Known as *mingqi*, or spirit utensils, they were strictly for funerary use.

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Painted *ding* vessel

彩繪漆衣陶鼎

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Lacquered earthenware

Shangluo Municipal Museum

Their lacquered decoration raises these pottery vessels from mere imitations to imaginative amplifications of their bronze prototypes. They show influences from the Chu state, the leader of the lacquer industry during the Warring States period.

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Painted *hu* vessel

彩繪漆衣陶壺

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Lacquered earthenware

Shangluo Municipal Museum

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Painted *dou* vessel

彩繪漆衣陶豆

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Lacquered earthenware

Shangluo Municipal Museum

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Incense burner

馬形陶熏

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

This unique incense burner looks like a horse carrying a cylindrical vessel on its back; a toad and a dog form a handle at the top. Smoke from incense burned inside the cylinder escaped through the animals' open mouths and from twelve tiny holes in the toad's back.

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Cavalryman and horse

彩繪騎兵陶俑

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Xianyang Municipal Institute of Archaeology

Created nearly one hundred years before the First Emperor's terracotta army, this earliest known example of a sculpted cavalryman and horse was one of a pair found in the same burial. The rider's left hand is raised to hold the reins (painted on the

horse's neck) and his right seems positioned to hold a weapon. Clay figurines appeared in the Qin state late in the Spring and Autumn period, when the practice of human sacrifice was waning, and became substitutes for human and animal victims.

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Standing female attendant

彩繪陶女俑

Standing male attendant

彩繪陶男俑

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Clay

Xi'an Municipal Institute of Archaeology

These two clay figures are from a group that also includes a horse, rider, and stable attendants. They are among a handful of sculpted figures made of clay, wood, and stone before the creation of the First Emperor's terracotta army.

Like the terracotta army, these figures were colorfully painted; traces of black, white, and vermilion pigments remain.

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Architectural fixture

蟠虺紋銅建築構件

Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE)

Bronze

Fengxiang County Museum

Excavations at the early Qin capital of Yong have revealed remnants hinting at the grandeur of the palaces, temples, and other structures. This bronze architectural fixture reinforced joints in wooden beams and also added ornamen-

tation. The design motifs were adapted from ritual bronzes of the Spring and Autumn period.

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**Roof tile end with
phoenix motif**

鳳鳥紋瓦當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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**Roof tile end with running
deer motif**

奔鹿紋瓦當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Roof tile end with scene of a man fighting a tiger

斗獸紋瓦當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Roof tile end with scene of a tiger attacking a wild swan

虎雁紋瓦當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Roof tile end with deer, frog, dog, and wild swan motifs

鹿犬雁蟾蜍紋瓦當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Roof tile end with canine motif

雙獾紋瓦當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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Qin potters decorated roof tile ends with a variety of creatures, real and mythical, often shown running or fighting. During the Warring States period, the standard form for roof tile ends shifted from semicircular to full circle.

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Semicircular roof tile end with phoenix motif

鳳紋半瓦當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Semicircular tile-end mold with tiger and deer motif

虎襲鹿紋半瓦當模

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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**Tile-end mold with
phoenix motif**

鳳紋瓦當模

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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**Roof tile end with stylized
floral motif**

葵紋瓦當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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**Roof tile end inscribed
“Tuoquan Palace”**

橐泉宮當

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

This roof tile end bears four characters in the Qin “small seal” script that read “Tuoquan gongdang” (tile end of the Tuoquan Palace). This information helps date the tile end to Duke Xiao’s reign (361–338 BCE), when the Tuoquan Palace was constructed.

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Yongzhong bell

青銅甬鐘

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

This bell, adorned with an interlaced serpent design, was found near the remains of a commander's chariot in terracotta army Pit 1. Bells and drums were likely used to convey commands during battle. The sound of drums directed troops to attack; bells signaled pause and retreat.

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Pushou animal-mask ring holder

青銅鋪首

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Xianyang Municipal Museum

Animal-mask ring holders, or *pushou*, had their origins in the *taotie* animal mask, one of the most common motifs of the early Bronze Age. This ring holder was once affixed to a door in one of the First Emperor's many opulent palaces in the Qin capital Xianyang. A bronze ring would have hung from the beast's trunklike mouth.

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Mirror

獸紋銅鏡

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

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Mirror

獸紋銅鏡

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Longxian Museum

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Fang vessel

青銅蟠虺紋釭

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) or later

Bronze

Xi'an Municipal Museum

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Suit of armor

石甲

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Limestone

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

This limestone body armor and the helmet in the adjacent case were reconstructed from fragments found in a pit thought to be the armory, not far from the tomb mound. The armor consists of more than six hundred stone plaques laced together with

copper wire. Excavation is ongoing, with over 130 stone suits of armor with helmets discovered to date. Stone armor was too heavy to wear into battle; it was made for burial. Combat armor was made of leather or metal.

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Helmet

石盔

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Limestone

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

Although historical records indicate that Qin army uniforms included helmets, the warriors in the terracotta army are without them. Not wearing full protective gear may have been seen as an act of valor. Zhang Yi, a military strategist of the Warring States period, wrote: "The Qin established

an army with over a million armored warriors, a thousand chariots, and tens of thousands of horses. The soldiers were all brave and strong warriors. In battle, those who dashed ahead with bare heads regardless for their safety, shooting the enemy with crossbows, were countless."

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Sword

青銅劍

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

Qin swords were longer than most swords made by the other warring states. A coating of chromium oxide helped the blade resist tarnish and corrosion.

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***Pi* lance head**

青銅“寺工”鉞

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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***Ji* halberd**

青銅“寺工”戟

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

The halberd (*ji*) is a composite weapon consisting of a dagger-ax (*ge*) attached to a wooden pole surmounted by a *mao* spearhead. The *ge* and *ji* were two of the main weapons of the Qin dynasty. An inscription identifies this halberd as being made by the official workshop.

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***Mao* spearhead with inscription**

青銅“寺工”矛

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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Twenty arrows

銅箭頭

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

Approximately 280 clusters of arrows were excavated from the terracotta army pits. Each cluster (one hundred

arrows) was originally contained in a quiver carried on the back of an archer. More than ten thousand three-sided bronze arrowheads were also found in the pits. A Qin dynasty improvement on earlier, two-sided arrowheads, they are designed to pierce armor and minimize the effect of wind.

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Crossbow trigger mechanism

銅弩機

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

Introduced in the Warring States period, the crossbow revolutionized military warfare. It was said to have the

capacity to fire bronze arrowheads, like those found in the terracotta warrior pits, a distance of about half a mile and required less strength than the composite bow. The bronze trigger mechanism (*nuji*) is made from four separately cast pieces and was refined by Qin craftsmen to improve its accuracy and range.

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Shu ritual mace head

銅殳

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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Standard weight with *Gaonu* inscription

高奴權

Warring States period, dated 244 BCE

Bronze

Shaanxi History Museum

Standard weights made of bronze and iron have been found throughout a broad area of China, suggesting that

implementation of a standardized system was widespread. This standard weight bears three inscriptions. The first indicates it was issued by the central government at Gaonu (present-day Yanchuan, Shaanxi); the second, added later, is the First Emperor's edict of 221 BCE requiring standardization of weights and measures; the third is a decree by the First Emperor's son reiterating his father's requirement of compliance.

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Plaque cast with an imperial edict

秦昭版

Qin dynasty, dated 221 BCE

Bronze

Shaanxi History Museum

In 221 BCE, the First Emperor issued this edict: "In the twenty-sixth year of his rule the emperor conquered all the vassal states under heaven, brought peace to the people, and declared himself emperor. He ordered prime ministers Kui Zhuang and Wang Wan to unify all inconsistent and incorrect weights and measures in accordance with the law."

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Coins from seven states

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Shaanxi History Museum

These coins represent the local currency types that preceded the national currency introduced by the First Emperor. The circular coin with a square hole in the center from the state of Qin became

the national currency and remained the common design for most Chinese copper coins until the 19th century. Reflecting traditional cosmology, the circle shape presumably symbolized heaven and the square opening in the center represented the earth.

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Qin official seal

秦“器府”官印

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Shaanxi History Museum

Another of the First Emperor's standardizations applied to official seals. Before the Qin dynasty, seals were made of various

materials including bronze, jade, silver, bone, antler, and clay. An imperial official was appointed to regulate official seals, all of which were now to be made of bronze, with the exception of imperial seals, which were to be jade. This seal bears two characters in the Qin "small seal" script: *qifu*, meaning "department of implements."

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Base for a lacquer object

青銅漆器座

Warring States period (475–221 BCE)

Bronze inlaid with silver

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

This unusual bronze piece was recovered from a tomb believed to be that of the First Emperor's grandmother. Traces of lacquer suggest that it served as the pedestal for a lacquer chest. Five rows of denticulation on the bottom prevent sliding.

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***Niuzhong* bell with inlay design**

錯金銀樂府鐘

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze, gold, and silver

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

This is the only bronze bell with gold and silver inlay excavated to date. Presumably

there were others like it, since it would have belonged to a graduated set. Sets of bells, suspended on wooden stands, were played by musicians to accompany performances. The inscription *yuefu* on the loop at the top means “music bureau,” the governmental organization charged with collecting and composing music.

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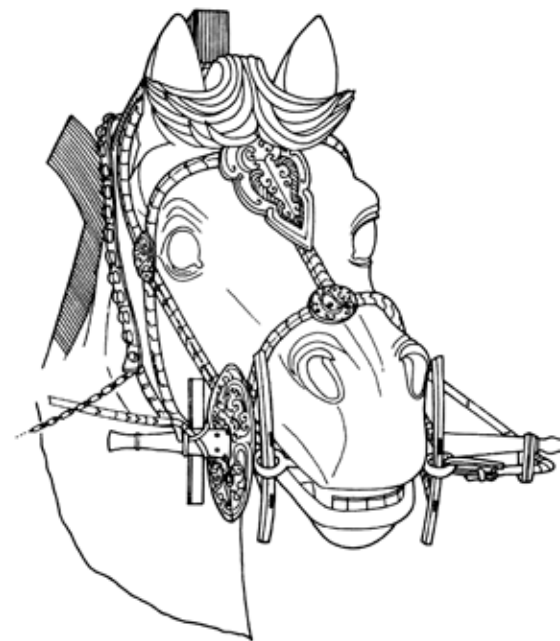
***Danglu* horse's brow ornament**

金當盧

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Gold

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum



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Rosette

蟠虺紋金泡飾

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Gold

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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Rosettes

蟠虺紋銀泡飾

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Silver

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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Chained bridle ornament

金節

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Gold

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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Animal-head ornament

獸頭銀飾件

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Silver

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

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Roof tile end with dragon design

夔紋大瓦當

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

This massive roof tile end from the Huangshan palace in the Qin capital of Xianyang hints at the scale and majesty of palace architecture under the First Emperor. The symmetrical, stylized design represents dragons facing each other.

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Rectangular paving tile with sun design

太陽紋長方鋪地磚

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Xianyang Municipal Museum

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Rectangular paving tile with geometric design

方格紋空心磚

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Xianyang Municipal Museum

The First Emperor is said to have overseen the construction of 270 palaces in the imperial capital of Xianyang, an endeavor that required vast numbers of laborers and raw materials. Palace floors were paved with ceramic tiles decorated with molded or stamped designs.

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Hollow brick with geometric design

幾何紋空心磚

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Xiangyang Municipal Museum

Hollow bricks decorated with geometric designs and images of mythical birds and beasts were used to pave the steps in the First Emperor's palaces.

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Hollow brick fragment with dragon design

龍紋空心磚

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Xianyang Municipal Museum

Hollow bricks were used as pavers for palace steps. The First Emperor's network of palaces in the capital city of Xianyang was intended to mirror the celestial realm, so the dragon and phoenix motifs on Qin paving bricks may have had cosmological significance.

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Pentagonal-shaped drainpipe

五角形陶管

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Xiangyang Municipal Museum

Sophisticated underground drainage systems were installed in the Qin capital of Xianyang and the First Emperor's tomb complex. The drainpipes were made in standard sizes of 52 to 60 inches long and 16 to 20 inches in diameter. Some were pentagonal, but most were cylindrical.

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Bronze plaque mold with design of running sheep

陶雙羊紋飾牌模

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

These ceramic molds were used to cast bronze plaques. They are a selection from a group of twenty-five plaque molds found in the tomb of a commoner buried north of Xi'an. The inclusion of molds in the tomb suggests the deceased was a craftsman skilled at bronze casting.

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Bronze plaque mold with motif of a mother holding her son

陶人物紋飾牌模

Bronze plaque mold with design of eagle and tigers in combat

陶鷹虎搏斗紋牌模

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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**Bronze plaque mold with
design of a galloping horse**

陶馬紋飾牌模

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Earthenware

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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