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Waterbirds

In 2001 a pit containing fifteen terracotta musicians and forty-six life-size bronze waterbirds was found about two miles northeast of the First Emperor's burial mound. The musicians and birds—twenty swans, six cranes, and twenty wild swans—line the banks of an artificial watercourse, and archaeologists think the pit likely represents the emperor's royal park. Like the terracotta army, the birds display a realism new to Chinese art. Lines on their bodies indicate feathers, and they were painted in lifelike detail.

Crane

銅鶴

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

Swan

銅天鵝

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

Wild swan

銅雁

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

Wild swan

銅雁

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze

Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology

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Qin imperial inscription carved on a stele on Mount Yi

嶧山刻石拓本

Qin dynasty, dated 219 BCE; recarved in 933 CE

Ink rubbings

Minneapolis Institute of Arts

On his five empire-wide inspection tours, the First Emperor erected stelae (upright stone monuments) lauding his achievements. This example has two inscriptions. The first was written by the emperor's prime minister in 219 BCE; the second is by the emperor's son and successor, Huhai, who followed in his father's footsteps and ascended Mount Yi in 209 BCE. The original stele was destroyed by fire in the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). The existing monument, from which these rubbings were taken, was re-inscribed during the Song dynasty (960–1279).

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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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Chariot 1 (replica)

一號銅車馬

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze, gold, and silver

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

This type of chariot, known as a *qiandaoche*, or “preceding chariot,” would have headed up a caravan. The charioteer, standing beneath a protective canopy, is armed with a sword, shield, crossbow, and quiver of arrows.

In 1980, two half-size chariots, each drawn by four horses and driven by an armed charioteer, were excavated from a pit just to the west of the First Emperor’s burial mound. Meticulously cast in bronze and richly embellished with gold, silver, and painted detail, they display a realism that was new in the art of ancient China. Each chariot set weighs over a ton. Replicas are on display here; the originals are Chinese national treasures and do not travel. The other chariot is in the first-floor lobby near the information desk.

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Chariot 2 (replica)

二號銅車馬

Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE)

Bronze, gold, and silver

Qin Shihuang Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum

Called a *wenliangche*, or “all-season carriage,” this enclosed chariot with small windows was perhaps intended to carry the emperor’s spirit into the afterlife. It is the type of vehicle that carried the emperor on his imperial inspection tours and transported his body home after his death.

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