

[LAI130875 Strib Features: Making History EDIT]

China's Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor's Legacy

StarTribune NIE #1

Making History: Who Was the First Emperor?

In 1974 farmers in Shaanxi, China, were digging a well when they unearthed fragments of clay figures. Little did they know they had discovered one of three pits that housed the Terracotta Army of China's First Emperor, Qin Shihuang (c. 259–210 BCE). Within months, archaeologists (scientists who learn about history by studying the things people leave behind) began excavating the tomb.

Since then archaeologists have discovered that Pit 1 (the main pit) measures 20 square miles and includes more than 6,000 statues of soldiers—including infantrymen, archers, and generals—and horses made of terracotta, a hard clay used to make pottery and building materials. Ongoing excavations continue to reveal treasures far beyond anyone's imagination.

Historians around the world knew about the First Emperor and his tomb from the writings of ancient historians, most notably, Sima Qian (c. 145 or 135–86 BCE), who wrote a book called the *Shi Ji*, or *Records of the Grand Historian of China*. Today findings from these tombs continue to fascinate us and encourage scientific inquiry.

The Terracotta Army of thousands of statues of soldiers and horses, equipped with weapons, chariots, and ornaments, was made to guard the First Emperor's tomb. Imagine how powerful he must have been to order 7,000 custom-made life-size statues, each one six to seven feet tall, unique, and fully colored! Who was this man?

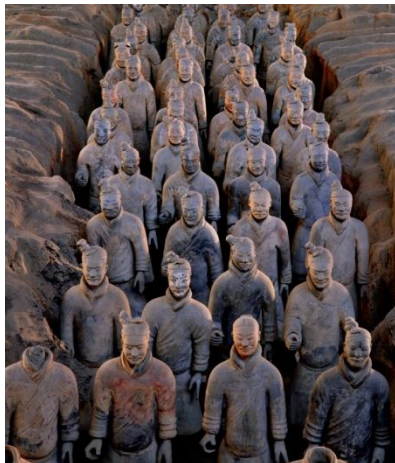
“Qin Shihuang” translates as “The First Emperor of the Qin.” But prior to attaining this title, he was named Ying Zheng. At age 13 he became king of the state of Qin. From that moment on he was driven by a desire to live forever after death, and began to plan for his burial. Born into a time of turmoil known as the Warring States period (475–221 BCE) in China, he created a powerful army and unified China's seven warring states into one nation. His legacy of a centralized nation would be carried on by successive dynasties over the next 2,000 years.

Use the News Activity!

Qin Shihuang was a successful but ruthless leader, remembered today as much for his positive achievements and his great Terracotta Army as for his tyranny. Much of what we believe about

him comes from the writing of Sima Qian, who lived a century later. His views of the First Emperor are considered biased because of the political climate at the time he was writing. Select an article from the StarTribune's Editorial section. What position is the writer taking? What words indicate the writer's position? Visit the Opinion/Exchange section of the newspaper. Select an article that changes your mind about an issue. What about the writer's argument helped change your mind?

Today, how do we know about people's accomplishments after they die? Read a selection of entries in the newspaper's Obituary section to see what kind of information is recorded or shared about deceased people. Compare a few obituaries to see how different writers place emphasis on different aspects of individuals' lives. What do the obituaries suggest about culture today? Analyze a single obituary. What does it tell you about the individual's family, work, volunteerism, values, and accomplishments? What else does it tell you?



China, Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), *Terracotta Warriors*, View of Pit 1 showing the Terracotta Army lined up at attention facing East. The images are produced with kind permission from the Qin Shihuang's Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum, ©Photograph by Xia Juxian and Guo Yan.