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## The Warriors of Xi'an

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China's age-old culture will be present in Barcelona in three exhibitions devoted respectively to Confucius, the ancient bronzes of Shanghai and the warriors of Xi'an. The last of these will be showing for the first time in Europe a selection of the terracotta army found in 1974 surrounding the tomb of the emperor Qinshihuang.

In September 2002, talks began with the Chinese embassy in Madrid with a view to bringing to Barcelona the Xi'an Warriors, the exhibition organised by the Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Bureau and National Administration for Cultural Heritage that was shown at the Hong Kong History Museum at the end of last year.

The aim is to give the public a chance to see a comprehensive sample of Chinese funerary art from the Qin and Han dynasties taken from the finds at the tombs of Qinshihuang and Hanjingdi, two recent archaeological discoveries of incalculable historical value. The works on view will show how Chinese culture evolved from war to peace. We shall see the powerful terracotta Qin warriors alongside the figures of the cultivated Han civilian functionaries and we shall have the fearful weapons of the Qin dynasty beside the ceramic figures of various domestic animals reflecting the everyday life of the Han rural communities.

The **Qin (221-207 BC)** and **Han (206 BC-220 AD)** dynasties are two of the key periods in the formation and consolidation of the Chinese empire. The first emperor, Qinshihuang, is credited with having unified the previously chaotic and decentralised system of independent kingdoms that had prevailed throughout the Springs and Autumns (519-453 BC) and the Warring Kingdoms (453-222 BC) periods. With the new political unity, a number of measures were introduced throughout the empire: the systems of weights and measures, currency and Chinese writing were all unified and the transport, communications and road system improved. This emperor was also responsible for joining up the different sections of the northern wall, known as the Great Wall. But the Qin Empire did not last long. It was overthrown by a generalised rebellion out of which arose the new Han dynasty which lasted 400 years coinciding with the Roman Empire. The Han dynasty provided the stability necessary for economic and cultural development and adopted Taoist thought. It inherited from the Qin dynasty a centralised system of power and reinforced it by creating a strong administration based on the system of civil examinations. During this time China's borders were extended until it occupied a large part of Central Asia and controlled the trade routes of Eurasia. At the same time, the Great Wall was lengthened to protect the new territories.

The 120 Qin and Han items in the exhibition come from several different institutions and museums in Shaanxi province, an area with a great wealth of cultural relics where some of the most important archaeological finds in China have been made.

In 1974, a peasant who was digging a well unearthed the first terracotta Xi'an soldier. It was then discovered that the emperor Qinshihuang, the unifier of China, had surrounded his tomb with an



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The Xi'an terracotta army discovered in 1974 surrounding the tomb of the emperor Qinshihuang. Above, right, a Chinese statue of Confucius, who will be the subject of an exhibition to be held at CaixaForum.

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entire terracotta army, all perfectly regimented, made up of soldiers, archers, equerries with their horses, stable boys, and so on, nearly 8,000 men including warriors and civil servants to supervise the whole military apparatus. They are all life-size and have different physical features and together form a striking earthenware army bearing witness to the conquest of territory that accompanied the unification of China. A selection of these figures will be shown here.

The Han items were found earlier. Since 1949, 10,000 tombs of emperors and important people of the Han Empire have been excavated all over China. The Han believed that when they died part of their soul became detached from the body and that it was therefore necessary to protect it with amulets to ensure it a safe journey to the other life. However, they also believed that the other part of the soul remained attached to the body and that this part should be provided with the status symbols that the person had had during their lifetime. These were items such as seals and jade ornaments corresponding to the rank they had had while they were alive and which, like the beetle, helped to keep the body incorrupt. As in other cultures, the body and soul also had to be provided with all the commodities the person had enjoyed while alive: servants, secretaries, domestic or sacred animals, granaries, lamps, water tanks, etc., all the elements of everyday life that might make the new existence of the body and part of the soul more comfortable after their death.

The challenge we wanted to respond to from the Forum was to explain in a readily understandable way part of the wealth of this ancient culture in an exhibition that would be attractive to anyone visiting it. That is why the design of the exhibition space was entrusted to Julia Schulz-Dornburg and Joan Pons, who chose to evoke –and what a good choice it was– the magic and the excitement of the archaeological find.

Before going into the exhibition hall, visitors will be shown an 8-10 minute film giving them clues enabling them to understand the exhibition. It is a didactic audiovisual that will introduce the public to Chinese culture and these two dynasties in particular. It was directed by Mariona Omedes, while Dolors Folch, a Sinologist and lecturer in

the History of China at the Pompeu Fabra University, helped with the script and the arrangement of the exhibits. The last shot of the film will be the first scene the public sees when the screen is raised at the end of the showing, causing a moment of surprise and constituting a magnificent invitation to go into the exhibition space.

So, following the introduction to this historical period, the discoveries made at these tombs and the importance of some of the items we will be presenting, the exhibition hall will open up before the audience re-creating the excavation, the moment when the archaeological find was actually made. A selection of terracotta warriors, some of the most important objects from the Qin dynasty, will gradually appear, including a general, an archer and an acrobat as well as a full set of armour in stone. The showcases containing the smaller exhibits, from the Han dynasty, will be placed between the layers of earth making up the wall while an appropriate atmosphere will be created by suggestive colours and extremely soft lighting. These objects include the tiny figurines of two naked men, domestic animals made of earthenware, articles of jade and bronze lamps.

The exhibition, which will be staged in Europe for the first time, will be housed in one of the buildings on the North Quay in the Port of Sant Adrià and will occupy a total surface area of 1,200 square metres. It is bound to be one of the most popular exhibitions at the Forum, with estimates putting the number of people coming to see it at nearly two million on the basis that it will be able to take 1000 visitors an hour during the 13.5 hours that the exhibition –the only one to close at 12.30 a.m.– will be open each day.

Two of the 20 exhibitions scheduled for the rest of the city will provide other views of this ancient culture. One, at CaixaForum, will be about the philosopher Confucius, while the other, at the National Museum of Art of Catalonia (MNAC) will show ancient bronzes from Shanghai. This means that Barcelona will be staging three exhibitions simultaneously on one of the most important cultures in civilisation, thereby stimulating that knowledge of the other which the Barcelona Forum 2004 is proposing in its dialogue for peace.