

## “The Quin Dynasty Army” Text & Photos by Bruce Hamilton, AIA

Ever since the world discovered China through the writings by adventurer Marco Polo, travelers have come to regard this large Asian country as the embodiment of all that is mysterious and exotic. This vast country has lost none of its fascination with a culture that dates back many millennia. For many Globetrotters, there are countless reasons to visit China....some include the Forbidden City in Beijing, the famous Great Wall winding for 6,700 kilometers from the Yellow Sea to Central Asia and the Terra-Cotta Army of Xi'an.

According to our local tour guide, while digging wells in the search for water on the outskirts of Xi'an in the 1970's, farmers stumbled upon a pit containing Terra-Cotta Soldiers, undoubtedly China's most important archeological find. The news aroused much attention from both the local government and **The National Historic Cultural Relics Administration**. This historic site, now part of the **Emperor Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum Park**, was identified as the burial place of Emperor Quin. Archaeologists soon descended and began excavation immediately.



Kneeling Archer on Display in the Museum

Distributed over three large underground pits built to guard the First Emperor's tomb were more than 8,000 life size warriors, approximately 520 horses and more than 100 chariots dating from around 280 BC. Historians believe that some 700,000 workers labored nearly three decades fabricating this historic site. Guarded by an army of terra-cotta soldiers, the emperor's tomb remained hidden for more than 2,200 years after his death. It stands as a testament to the importance bestowed upon the emperor and the afterlife.



Partial View of Factory - How the Terra-Cotta Soldiers were Assembled

Upon arriving at this Terra-Cotta Mausoleum Park, our tour group proceeded to the Museum and Factory, which is a treasure house where we were able to learn, in the factory, how the terra-cotta soldiers were assembled. The construction of the terra-cotta figures required several steps. As demonstrated by craftsmen and artisans in the museum/factory, the heads of the terra-cotta figures were made in two-piece molds that were joined together. Ears, noses and hair were made independently and then added on. In order to create an individualized appearance for each of the figures, such facial features as the mouth, moustache and beards were sculpted using sharp bamboo. No two figures have the

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Panoramic View of Pit #1

huge arch-domed steel structure), approximately 16,000 square meters (172,000 s.f.). The terra-cotta warriors and horses are arrayed in a battle formation. Our local tour guide noted that at the eastern end of the pit there are three rows of vanguards, 68 in each totaling 204 warriors who were equipped with genuine bows and cross bows. Immediately behind the vanguards is the main body of the battle formation: 30 chariots with armored and unarmored warriors, each of which were drawn by horses.

After touring Pit #1, we journey to Pit #2... “L” shaped with a protruding rectangular area at the northeast corner. This pit was discovered in 1976, covering an area of 6,000 square meters. Over 1,300 warriors were placed in four specialized military forces known as the “sword-formation”, consisting of kneeling/standing archers, chariots with chariot horses, infantrymen and cavalrymen.

Our historic journey continued onto Pit #3, the smallest of the three pits. According to our tour guide Pit #3 is known as the command center of the entire army where high-ranking officers would convene to strategize. Visiting Pit #1, 2 and 3 offered our tour group the unforgettable experience of standing in front of this assembly of soldiers, horses and chariots as if inspecting a centuries-old parade.

From the depths of an ancient underworld, thousands of long-buried life size terra-cotta warriors have slowly emerged into the light of day. Touring through this archaeological wonder, our tour group was able to step back thousands of years to an emperor’s dying wish to take his extravagant life to his afterlife.



Photo of Terra-Cotta Soldiers in Pit #2

same features or expression. The local artisans believed that real soldiers, at that time, served as models when the terra-cotta soldiers were crafted. Besides different faces, features as the armor plates with fixings, belt hooks and costume details were precisely sculpted. After each statue was assembled, the craftsmen were ordered to inscribe their names on the back of the robes, legs or armor, perhaps a 2,000-year-ago quality control.

After leaving the Terra-Cotta Museum and Factory, our tour group visited Pit #1 (which is a



**Bronze Chariot & Horses on Display in the Museum**

as a world-class culture heritage site.

For those Globetrotters unable to make the journey to the Qin Dynasty Army at Xi'an, a small portion of the relics unearthed from the tomb, including warriors and horses, have been loaned to museums around the world including an exhibit at the National Geographic Society Museum in Washington, D.C.

Today, the description "Eighth Wonder of the World" has become synonymous with the Terra-Cotta Museum. In 1987, the Emperor Qin's Mausoleum was placed on the UNESCO list