

James C.S. Lin and Xiuzhen Li (2018). *China's First Emperor and the Terracotta Warriors*. Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool. 152 pp., ISBN 978-1-902700-59-5.

In February 2018 a new exhibition entitled *China's First Emperor and the Terracotta Warriors* opened at the World Museum, in Liverpool. Organised in collaboration with the Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau and Shaanxi History Museum, this did not of course represent the first visit of the Terracotta Army to these shores. In terms of public engagement, however, it was undoubtedly a major coup for Liverpool: a small selection of the figures drew some 225,000 visitors to the City Arts Centre in Edinburgh in 1985; whilst the British Museum's blockbuster 2007-8 exhibition attracted crowds that had not been seen since the ground-breaking Tutankhamun exhibition in 1980. The Liverpool exhibition showcased some 180 items, over half of which had not previously been seen in the UK. Given the range of material on display and the undoubted widespread popular interest in Qin Shi Huang's Terracotta Army, it is accordingly not surprising that National Museums Liverpool took the decision to produce a new publication to accompany the exhibition.

China's First Emperor and the Terracotta Warriors is divided into five individually credited chapters, each of which effectively represents a stand-alone essay. The first of these, authored by James C.S. Lin of the Ashmolean Museum, sets the exhibition within its wider historical context by providing a whistle-stop tour of early Chinese history from the Neolithic to the Zhou. This is followed by a similarly pithy introduction to the Warring States Period and the rise of the Qin, also authored by Lin. Both of these essays have undoubtedly been written with a general audience very much in mind. They are engaging, easy to follow, and benefit from the well-judged selection of supporting maps and images.

The third chapter is authored by Xiuzhen Li of the Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum Site Museum. An expert on the First Emperor's tomb complex, Li is well-qualified to provide an overview of Qin Shi Huang's origins, achievements, palaces and peregrinations. The chapter concludes with an account of the First Emperor's death, providing a neat segue into Li's next contribution, which is entitled "The Terracotta Warriors". At some 40 pages in

length, this is by far the most substantial section of the volume. The chapter's title is arguably a little misleading, as its focus extends well beyond the emperor's sculpted guardians. Rather, Li first focusses on exploring the location of his tomb through the lenses of both landscape and geomancy, before going on to discuss the logistics of construction and the nature of the layout of the wider tomb complex. Only then does discussion turn to the Terracotta Warriors and the other grave goods recovered from the site. Here Li plays to her strengths, and the section focussing upon the production of the figures and their weapons draws upon recent international research undertaken by the Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum Site Museum in collaboration with UCL's Institute of Archaeology.

Thus far, the volume has covered much the same ground as previously covered by Jane Portal in *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army* (2007) and Liu Yang in *China's Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor's Legacy* (2013). The final chapter, however, moves into fresh territory by taking up the story after the fall of the Qin. Here, James C.S. Lin turns the spotlight onto the Han, exploring both the Han royal tombs constructed to the north of the old capital Chang'an and the royal tombs of Eastern China. A judicious choice of imagery captures both the painstaking process of archaeological excavation and the vast and diverse range of animal figures that populated the breath-taking underground "cities" of the Western Han rulers. Less familiar to European eyes than the Qin warriors, these miniature sculptures are nonetheless mesmerising and serve as a poignant reminder of the Han belief in an afterlife as a continuation of the mortal world.

But after so long spent exploring China's tombs, it is perhaps with some relief that the reader emerges once again into the light, for the final chapter is not entirely dedicated to the afterlife. Rather, it seems timely and appropriate that the volume should end with a nod to the "Belt and Road"; using archaeological evidence to stress the importance of the land and sea links that connected Han China both to the rest of Asia and to the West.

In conclusion, *China's First Emperor and the Terracotta Warriors* seeks neither to serve as an exhibition catalogue, nor as a scholarly resource. Rather, it is a book that is unashamedly targeted at the non-specialist museum-goer.

But, if we are seeking to expand public understanding and appreciation of Chinese history, such popularism is in itself no bad thing. Lin and Li have written an excellent and highly accessible introduction to the topic, and both the authors and their editor (Karen Miller) are to be heartily congratulated upon creating such a lively and readable text.

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