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**Warriors: Tombs and Temples**  
The Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, CA.

The Bowers Museum, located in Santa Ana, had the rare opportunity to host a traveling exhibit titled, “Warriors - Tombs and Temples: China’s Enduring Legacy,” from October 2011 to March 2012. The museum exhibit was a display of Chinese artifacts discovered in tombs from the Qin, Han and Tang Dynasties. Many of the pieces focus on the differences between the three dynasties, while showing the magnitude of China’s depth of historical significance.

A brief introduction of the Qin, Han and Tang Dynasties give the visitors a window into China’s past. The first artifacts encountered are four of the more than 7,000 Terra Cotta Warriors that were found in the tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE). During his reign, he became obsessed with death and forced thousands of Chinese citizens to build his tomb, replicating the world. While the Bowers Museum only displayed four of these Warriors, they were able to display an aerial view of one of these pits along one entire wall to give visitors a better perspective on just how massive this project was. Each Warrior has a distinctively different face that leads experts to believe that some of the Warriors may have been replicated off of real people living during that time period. The Bowers Museum showed about a dozen lit facial portraits so that people can see the differences in some of Warriors.

Moving into the next room, visitors immediately notice a difference in grandeur between the pieces from the imperial tomb compounds of the Han Dynasty emperors, Gaozu and Jingdi, and those from Qin Shi Huangdi’s tomb. The Han Dynasty inherited and built upon the Qin unification, institutions and standardization, while softening the harsh laws and instituting the Confucian examination system for hiring governmental officials and the belief structure of living frugally. Reflecting this, the Han exhibit section is done on a much smaller scale than the Qin dynasty, but no less artistically pleasing. Excavated out of Emperor Gaozu’s tomb were many earthenware standing infantry soldiers that were painted just as brilliantly as the Qin Dynasty’s Terra Cotta Warriors. The Terra Cotta Warriors were full size replicas, while the Han Dynasty’s Warriors only measure about 50 centimeters.
The focus of the items discovered in Emperor Jingdi’s tomb suggests agricultural economy was peaceful and prosperous. The miniature earthenware animal replicas were about 1 ½ centimeters high. The pieces displayed from the Han Dynasty are not as large as those from the Qin Dynasty; however, it is still astonishing that these artifacts have survived intact for over 2,000 years.

The final section of the exhibition is from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 BCE), which is considered one of China’s most glorious ages. One of the pieces is a miniature bodhi tree worked in filigree on a gold sheet with unbelievable detail, considering the tools available over 1,000 years ago. The depiction and placement of a bodhi tree and the four nesting containers (the smallest believed, by Buddhists, to hold Buddha’s finger bone) reflect the influence Buddhism had during the Tang Dynasty.

The Bowers Museum, in collaboration with seven leading Chinese institutions, present a truly exceptional display of artifacts from the Qin, Han, and Tang Dynasties; defining eras of Chinese history: periods of unification, military might, enormous territorial expanse, wealth, foundational institution building, advances in culture, art, craftsmanship and technology. The artifacts on display are a beautiful reminder of China’s long past and their enduring legacy not only to their own citizens, but to people around the world.

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