



OLDER THAN TIME

On October 12, 2003, a Long March 2F rocket carried China's first astronaut, Yang Liwei, into the history books. The name Long March connects the launch with Mao's historic odyssey and the founding of the People's Republic of China. But Shenzhou V has even deeper roots. Instead of blasting off from the Gobi Desert, perhaps the launch pad should have been at Xi'an, China's first capital, where 2200 years ago Qin Shi Huang ignited the spark of modern China, one that lit the fuse of the Shenzhou spacecraft.

Qin was hard; but his ruthlessness had purpose: to realize his dreams; and in making his visions into reality, he founded a nation that has recently put a man in space, plans on building a space station, and has the world's most vigorous economy. It is fitting that from Shenzhou V, Yang Liwei could have, with the aid of a simple pair of binoculars, looked down on another of Qin's legacies, the Great Wall. Without Qin's vision, China might have remained like Europe, a collection of warring states, with separate languages, different standards of weights and measures, different currencies, and no collective focus. With a divided and separate collection of smaller states, there would have been no Great Wall and there would be no Shenzhou V today. It is, I think, simplistic to dismiss Qin as an eccentric who thought he could live forever by building some statues and burying them like a dog does bones. History records that the Qin Dynasty lasted from 221 to 206 BC. Yet one of the shortest dynasties in China's history has ultimately endured the longest.

Probably Qin's most enduring achievement, therefore, was the welding of China into one country according to the mandate Tian Xia ("all under heaven"). For most people, however, he will be remembered for the Great Wall and especially the Terra Cotta Warriors.



Fate sometimes has an ironic sense of humor. Qin wanted immortality and hoped to achieve it through the warriors he thought he could command in the afterlife. Those first pottery figures were short-lived, reduced to pieces by invading Han armies; but 2200 years after his death, a steady stream of buses carries nearly two million curious visitors to the museum each year, where they speak in hushed tones and stare in wonder at the legacy of the man who produced them.

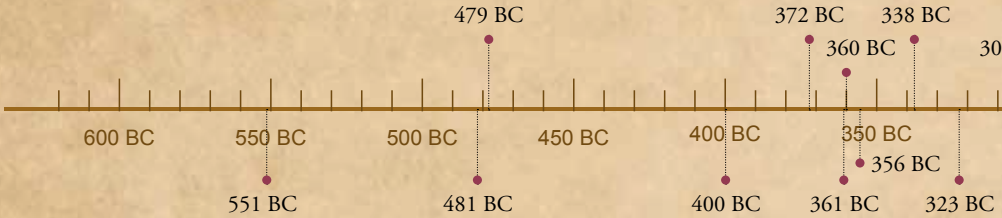
Qin has left his mark on China. As well, he has left us with many questions. By far the most interesting one, the one you hear on every pair of lips at the museum in Xi'an, is this: Why? Why?

Qin Shi Huang is more alive today than ever before. He is the subject of a flood of recent films: the 1995 controversial Canadian production "The First Emperor of China" (directed by Tony Ianzela and Liu Haoxue); Chen Kaige's "The Emperor and the Assassin"; Zhang Yimou's Oscar-nominated "Hero" and his opera featuring Placido Domingo as the First Emperor, scheduled for the New York Met in 2007; Jackie Chan's very popular 2005 time travel film "Myth"; as well a recent National Geographic special "Qin: Emperor of Eternity".

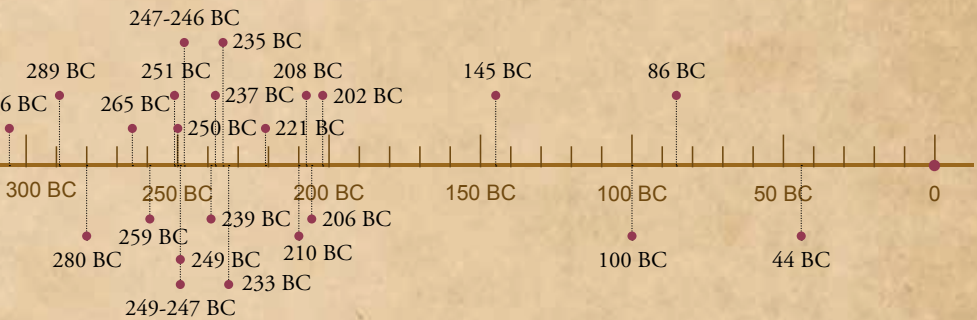
Furthermore, attendance at the museum continues to increase. Qin, if he could see all the recognition he is now receiving, would be... pleased. After all these years, people still scrambling – or, in the case of the museum workers putting puzzle pieces together, descrambling – to do his bidding.



TIMELINES RELATING TO QIN SHI HUANG



| | |
|--------|---|
| 551 BC | birth of Confucius |
| 481 BC | beginning of the Warring States Period |
| 479 BC | death of Confucius |
| 400 BC | birth of Sun Zi |
| 372 BC | birth of Mencius |
| 361 BC | Shang Yang to the state of Qin as advisor to Ying Quliang (Qin Xiao Gong) |
| 360 BC | death of Sun Zi |
| 356 BC | birth of Alexander the Great |
| 338 BC | deaths of Ying Quliang and Shang Yang |
| 323 BC | death of Alexander the Great |
| 306 BC | young Ying Ji (Qin Zhao Xiang Wang), King of Qin with mother as Regent. |
| 289 BC | death of Mencius |
| 280 BC | birth of Han Fei |
| 265 BC | death of Empress Dowager Xuan |
| 259 BC | birth of Qin Shi Huang |
| 251 BC | death of Ying Ji |
| 250 BC | Ying Zhu (Qin Xiao Wen Wang), King of Qin |



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| 249-247 BC | Ying Chu (Zhuang Xiangwang), King of Qin |
| 249 BC | Lv Buwei is Prime Minister of Qin |
| 247-246 BC | Prince Ying Zheng is made Emperor at age 13. Li Si comes to Qin |
| 239 BC | Lv Buwei's encyclopedia is completed |
| 237 BC | Lv Buwei removed as Prime Minister |
| 235 BC | suicide of Lv Buwei |
| 233 BC | death of Han Fei |
| 221 BC | Ying Zheng becomes Emperor Qin Shi Huang |
| 210 BC | death of Qin Shi Huang. Hu Hai becomes Qin Er Shi |
| 208 BC | death of Li Si |
| 206 BC | deaths of Hu Hai and Zi Ying, overthrow of Qin dynasty |
| 202 BC | start of Han dynasty |
| 145 BC | birth of Sima Qian |
| 100 BC | birth of Julius Caesar |
| 86 BC | death of Sima Qian |
| 44 BC | death of Julius Caesar |

CHAPTER 1



STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

