



13<sup>th</sup> March 2013

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Opening**

**“Qin – The eternal emperor and his terracotta warriors”**

**15<sup>th</sup> March – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

**Face to face with the history of China**

**On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2013 the Bernisches Historisches Museum will open its doors to welcome visitors to the large temporary exhibition “Qin – The eternal emperor and his terracotta warriors”. From then until 17<sup>th</sup> November 2013, a full 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space will be dedicated to China’s First Emperor and his spectacular terracotta army. Supported by UBS as the presenting sponsor, the exhibition will put on display ten terracotta figures and some 220 other original artefacts from China, thus introducing audiences to a crucial phase in Chinese history.**

The Bernisches Historisches Museum is staging a large temporary exhibition on the First Emperor of China entitled “Qin – The eternal emperor and his terracotta warriors”, which will run from 15<sup>th</sup> March to 17<sup>th</sup> November 2013. Using 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space, it will introduce Swiss and Central European audiences to a crucial period in Chinese history. The central focus of the three-part exhibition will be on the formation of the Chinese Empire in 221 BC, on the flamboyant First Emperor and his monumental tomb complex with its spectacular terracotta army, as well as the period’s legacy for China. The impressive architecture of the exhibition will allow its visitors to follow the rise of Qin from a principality to an empire and to understand the importance of the First Emperor for present-day China. The highlight of the exhibition will be ten life-sized terracotta figures from the First Emperor’s gigantic tomb complex. Not only will they give visitors an impressive insight into the Emperor’s afterlife but also into one of the most spectacular archaeological discoveries of all time, often termed the “Eighth Wonder of the World”.

**From principality to imperial dynasty**

The development of Qin from a Principality to a Kingdom and eventually to an Empire is the focus of the first section of the exhibition. During a time of increasing prosperity (9<sup>th</sup> century – 210 BC), opulent palaces were built, crafts flourished and the ruling classes in Xianyang, the capital city, lived a life of luxury. Between 230 and 221 BC Ying Zheng, the King of Qin, succeeded in subjecting six other kingdoms and creating a new empire. He declared himself Qin Shi Huangdi, the First Emperor of Qin. In order to hold his huge empire together, he created a central administration and ruled with an iron fist. He connected existing ramparts to form the Great Wall of China, and standardised currencies, measurements and Chinese characters. To this day, the standardised writing system is a crucial unifying force throughout the multi-ethnic state of China

**The First Emperor’s tomb complex**

The second spectacular section of the exhibition takes visitors into the First Emperor’s tomb complex. It conveys the vast dimensions of the area, which has only been partially uncovered, and which, besides an army of 8,000 soldiers for the Emperor’s protection, also comprises administrative officers to run the affairs of government in the afterlife, musicians, acrobats and animals to provide entertainment. “Our exhibits not only provide a look back at the era of the First Emperor but also make history come alive. Visitors come face to face with the ceramic figures and can enter into a dialogue with them, so to speak”, says Dr. Maria Khayutina, the curator of the exhibition, and Director Dr. Jakob Messerli, the project

manager for the exhibition, adds “Qin Shi Huangdi’s burial chamber has still not been opened! The fact that its secrets are still there to be discovered has its special allure, which we hope to convey to our visitors with this unique exhibition.”

### **The First Emperor’s legacy**

The heyday of the Qin Dynasty was short-lived – it was overthrown after just 15 years (207 BC). The third and last section of the exhibition shows its legacy, which was considerable nonetheless: The centrally administered empire as a system of government continued in China until 1911. To this day, Qin Shi Huangdi is still part of Chinese historical awareness – while in the West we know very little about him. “By disseminating knowledge about the Emperor and his legacy”, says Dr. Jakob Messerli, “the exhibition opens a window onto the history of China and allows a wider audience to discover the Middle Kingdom for themselves.”

### **A UBS cultural engagement**

It would not be possible to mount an exhibition of this size without corporate support. “UBS is committed to and passionate about staging first-class national cultural events. Sponsoring such events mirrors our ties with Switzerland. We are delighted to support the exhibition “Qin – The eternal emperor and his terracotta warriors” and to promote the dialogue and engagement with the fascinating history and culture of China, Lukas Gähwiler, CEO of UBS Switzerland, explains.

### **Original objects exclusively from Chinese lending institutions**

The exhibition, which will only run in Bern, is being staged by the Bernisches Historisches Museum in collaboration with the Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau and the Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Promotion Centre, People’s Republic of China.

### **Background information**

The terracotta army of the First Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huangdi (259 – 210 BC), was discovered by chance in the Chinese Province of Shaanxi (capital city Xi’an) in 1974. The army of around 8,000 life-sized warriors is part of a gigantic tomb complex, at the centre of which is an image of the world. The terracotta army is one of the most spectacular and most famous archaeological discoveries of all time. Since 1987 it has been inscribed on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites and is often called the “Eighth Wonder of the World”. Qin Shi Huangdi was both an influential and controversial figure in Chinese history. He conquered and united large parts of present-day China, set in motion the construction of the Great Wall of China, and unified the currencies, measurements and weights. He also introduced a standardised system of writing which acted as a unifying force throughout the vast Chinese Empire.

Find out more about the exhibition at [www.qin.ch](http://www.qin.ch)

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### **Images**

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