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ART BY HONGNIAN ZHANG

glimpse of something entirely unexpected but also a reminder of how little is actually known about the burial goods of Qin Shi Huang Di.

"We've realized there might be more varied figures in other pits," says Zhang Yinglan, vice-director of the museum's archaeological team. "These figures are concerned only with everyday life, while the others all have military aspects. The military ones are very stiff and formal, but these are so different."

Many of the newly unearthed figures are in motion. One appears to be in the act of lifting, another might be spinning something on his finger, and the potbellied statue may be using the object in his hands to grip a pole upon which an acrobat could perform. These figures suggest a lighter side of court life under Qin Shi Huang Di, but, most important, they represent a major artistic breakthrough in a culture whose traditional art never emphasized the anatomy of the human body.

"You wouldn't believe that they were Chinese if you didn't know where they'd come

from," says Wang Tao, a lecturer in the department of art and archaeology at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. He compares the statues' style to that of the ancient Greeks—and indeed these figures may reflect Qin cultural exchanges with non-Chinese peoples. Before unifying China, the state of Qin was on the western fringes of what would eventually become the empire, and Qin Shi Huang Di's ancestors were in contact with a number of foreign tribes whose art may have been influenced by interactions with ancient Greece.

The terra-cotta statues are also a powerful example of how archaeology can refine and sharpen views of history. The traditional view of Chinese history has stressed Qin Shi Huang Di's "unifications": standardization of the writing system, currency, weights and measures, and axle widths (to facilitate transportation). The emperor is also known for building the first version of the Great Wall. The dynasty name, pronounced "cheen," is probably the