

China in 650



EASTERN TURKS

TANG DYNASTY

GREAT WALL

Beijing

Yellow River

X'ian
(Chang'an)

Luoyang

Yangtze River

Chengdu

Wuhan

Nanjing

TIBET

Changsha

Ningbo

Guangzhou

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Human Tomb Figurines

By the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) human sacrifice as part of the funerary ceremony had mostly ceased and clay models were interred instead. This practice, widespread through the Tang dynasty (618–907), continued into the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).

Most clay funerary figurines represented the servants and protectors of the deceased and included such types as warriors, entertainers, cooks, grooms, and maidservants of the court. A fascinating study of changes in fashion and ideals of beauty can be made using these tomb models.

The human figurines in these tombs were arranged in a definite hierarchy. Models of servants and support staff were arranged along floors and in niches. Images of the deceased and his or her peers, as well as admired historical personalities and divine beings, were painted on walls, carved in stone, and impressed in the clay tiles that made up the sarcophagus and the interiors of the tomb.

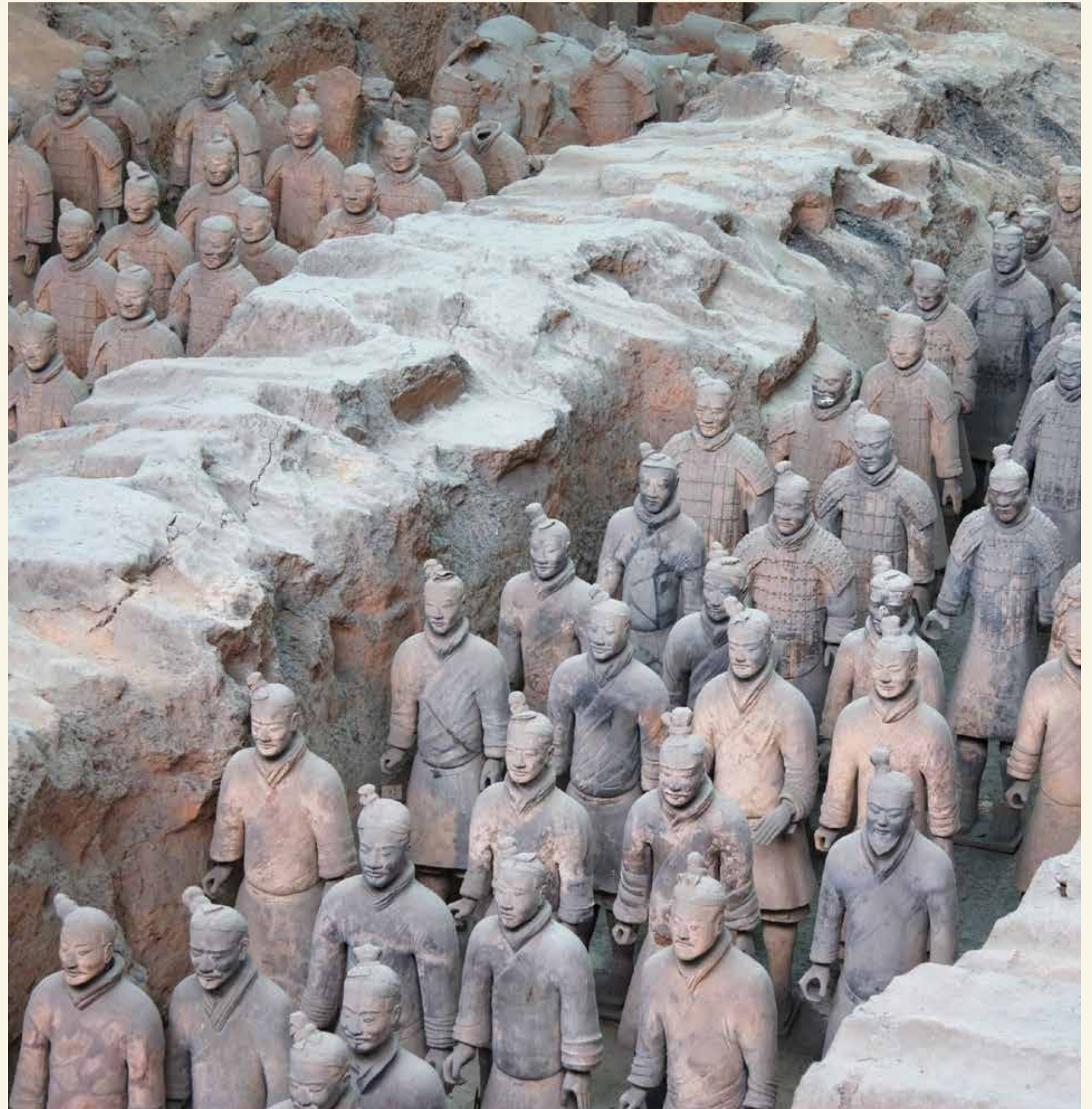


Seated female tomb figurine, Eastern Han period (25–220).



Female tomb figurine, Western Han period (206 BCE–9 CE).

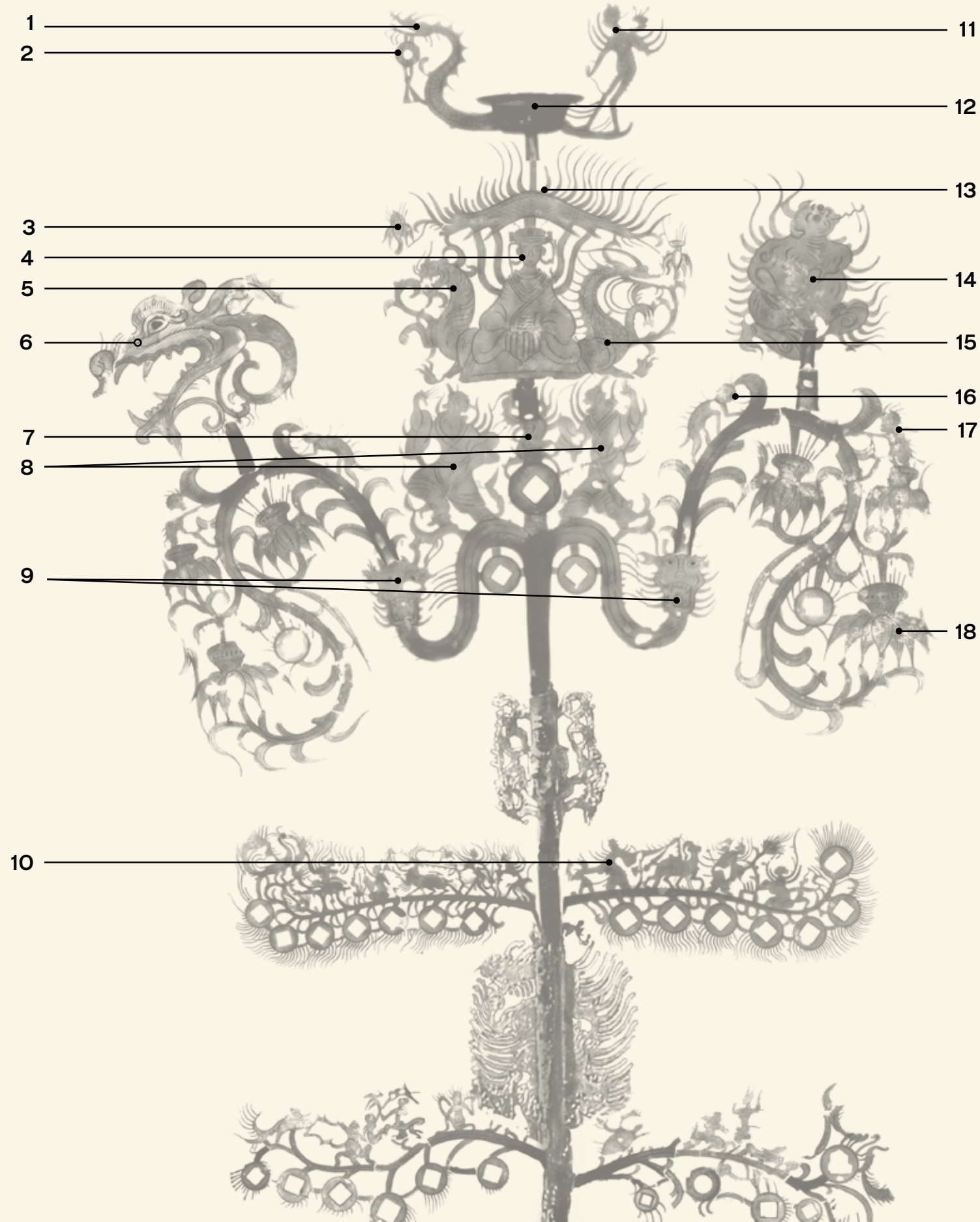
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Life-size terra-cotta army of Emperor Shihuang, founder of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE). *Maros M r a z, Wikimedia Commons.*

Money Tree Motifs

Motifs depicted in a money tree featuring the Queen Mother of the West and a seated Buddha.



- 1 A dragon empowering the preparation of the elixir.
- 2 A jade disk (*bi*) with silk ribbons protecting the process of the elixir making.
- 3 Flaming blossoms, among the sacred plants that deities live on.
- 4 The Queen Mother of the West, the legendary supreme deity of heaven.
- 5 A tiger, one of the two guards and drivers of the Queen Mother of the West.
- 6 A dragon head concealing its body.
- 7 A beast dancing over a coin.
- 8 Two deities in human form, keeping the beast company.
- 9 A two-headed dragon, carrying the entertainers.
- 10 A seated Buddha surrounded by sacred trees.
- 11 A winged deity preparing magic elixir shown holding a *lingzhi* mushroom in his hand. This fungus is a symbol of longevity.
- 12 A metal vessel used for the preparation of elixir and for holding the eternal flame.
- 13 A chime-shaped canopy, a symbol of celestial rites, belonging to the Queen Mother of the West.
- 14 A monster blowing a reptile from its mouth and glaring with rage.
- 15 A dragon, one of the two guards and drivers of the Queen Mother of the West.
- 16 A monkey reaching for a flaming blossom on a sacred tree.
- 17 A beast catching up with the monkey.
- 18 Sacred trees believed to blossom once every several thousand years.

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