

PRESS RELEASE

**"CHINA - THE FIRST EMPEROR'S CENTURY"
July 17th - August 31st 2001**

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As part of the official visit by H.S.H. Crown Prince Albert to the People's Republic of China in 1999, the Principality of Monaco initiated a programme of cultural exchanges with the People's Republic of China. It is as part of this programme that the Principality is hosting an exhibition devoted to Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi: "China - the First Emperor's Century". It will be held from July 17th to August 31st 2001 at the Grimaldi Forum, the Principality's new cultural and congress centre.

This retrospective opens with the presentation of twenty life-size terracotta warriors from the tomb of the First Emperor, who died in 221 BC. They are displayed in a detailed replica of part of the Emperor's burial site in Xi'an.

A short film relates events from the Emperor's life, inspired by the writings of Sima Qian, a Chinese historian who, in the following century, delved into the Emperor's lifework. Visitors find themselves at the heart of one of the greatest enigmas of ancient times.

A unique selection of almost one hundred and twenty pieces (ceramics, bronzes, gold-work, statues, etc.) loaned by museums in Shaanxi province bears witness to the sumptuous reign of this sovereign, renowned for his exceptional political and military skills. The initiator of China's reunification, he went on to reform the old royal structures and in doing so paved the way for unprecedented economic growth. Under his reign, the size, population and influence of China rivalled that of the Roman empire. An animated panorama will retrace the main stages of some of his works, such as the Great Wall and its palaces, now disappeared.

The exhibition ends with a selection of objects from the next imperial line, the Han dynasty (206 BC - AD 220). These were discovered in recent decades during archaeological digs in three of the imperial court's most important tombs: Yangjiawan, Jingdi and Maoling.

These archaeological treasures are presented alongside state-of-the-art technology that will help the public better understand one of the most ancient dynasties, including an audiovisual display with a three-dimensional reconstruction of the excavated palaces.

A catalogue of texts by Chinese and Western specialists will commemorate the exhibition.

At the end of the circuit, visitors will be offered a selection of products inspired by the exhibition theme in addition to a limited number of contemporary items made using traditional manufacturing techniques.

J.-P. DESROCHES