In 1974 near the city of Xi’an, China, archaeologists uncovered not just one warrior but part of a terracotta army – an army of nearly 8000 soldiers, built to guard the tomb of China’s First Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi.

The clay army looks just as Qin’s army did when the tomb was built over 2000 years ago. There are bowmen, crossbowmen, foot soldiers, archers and six horse-drawn charioteers in wood and bronze chariots. Each group wears a different style of armour and clothing. The charioteers carry shields and heavy armour made of 324 separate plates. The bowmen and crossbowmen wear no armour and only the officers wear helmets. The face and hairstyle on each warrior is different.

Qin Shi Huangdi became ruler at the age of 13. He was a harsh man but he was also a practical ruler who achieved great things. His workers built the 3000-kilometre-long Great Wall of China and a vast network of roads. As the First Emperor, he united China, created one language, one money system and standard units of measurement.

Emperor Qin wanted his tomb to be spectacular so he spent a lifetime planning and building it. From 221 BCE until the emperor’s death in 210 BCE, some 700 000 workers created nearly 8000 life-size clay warriors.