

## = Qianling Mausoleum =

The Qianling Mausoleum ( Chinese : 乾陵 ; pinyin : Qiánlíng ) is a Tang dynasty ( 618 ? 907 ) tomb site located in Qian County , Shaanxi province , China , and is 85 km ( 53 mi ) northwest from Xi 'an , formerly the Tang capital . Built by 684 ( with additional construction until 706 ) , the tombs of the mausoleum complex house the remains of various members of the House of Li , the imperial family of the Tang dynasty . This includes Emperor Gaozong ( r . 649 ? 83 ) , as well as his wife , Wu Zetian , who usurped the Tang throne and became China 's only governing female emperor from 690 ? 705 . The mausoleum is renowned for its many Tang dynasty stone statues located above ground and the mural paintings adorning the subterranean walls of the tombs . Besides the main tumulus mound and underground tomb of Emperor Gaozong and Wu Zetian , there are 17 smaller attendant tombs or peizang mu . Presently , only five of these attendant tombs have been excavated by archaeologists , three belonging to members of the imperial family , one to a chancellor , and the other to a general of the left guard .

## = History =

Following his death in 683 , Emperor Gaozong 's mausoleum complex was completed in 684 . After her death , Wu Zetian was interred in a joint burial with Emperor Gaozong at Qianling on July 2 , 706 . Tang dynasty funerary epitaphs in the tombs of her son Li Xián ( Crown Prince Zhanghuai , 653 ? 84 ) , grandson Li Chongrun ( Prince of Shao , posthumously honored Crown Prince Yide , 682 ? 701 ) , and granddaughter Li Xianhui ( Lady Yongtai , posthumously honored as Princess Yongtai , 684 ? 701 ) in the mausoleum are inscribed with the date of burial as 706 AD , allowing historians to accurately date the structures and artwork of the tombs . In fact , this Sui and Tang dynasty practice of interring an epitaph that records the person 's name , rank , and dates of death and burial was consistent amongst tombs for the imperial family and high court officials . Both the Old Book of Tang and New Book of Tang record that , in 706 , Wu Zetian 's son Emperor Zhongzong ( r . 684 , 705 ? 10 , Li Chongrun 's and Li Xianhui 's father and Li Xián 's brother ) exonerated the victims of Wu Zetian 's political purges and provided them with honorable burials , including the two princes and princess mentioned above . Besides the attendant tombs of these royal family members , two others that have been excavated belonging to Chancellor Xue Yuanchao ( 622 ? 83 ) and General of the Left Guard Li Jinxiang .

The five attendant tombs mentioned above were opened and excavated in the 1960s and early 1970s . In March 1995 , there was an organized petition to the Chinese government about efforts to finally excavate Emperor Gaozong and Wu Zetian 's tomb .

## = Location =

The mausoleum is located on Mount Liang , north of the Wei River , and 1 @, @ 049 m ( 3 @, @ 442 ft ) above sea level . The grounds of the mausoleum are flanked by Leopard Valley to the east and Sand Canyon to the west . Although there are tumulus mounds to demarcate where each tomb is located , most of the tomb structures are subterranean . The tumulus mounds on the southern peaks are called Naitoushan or " Nipple Hills " , due to their resemblance to the shape of nipples . The Nipple Hills , with towers erected on the top of each to accentuate the hills ' name , form a sort of gateway into Qianling Mausoleum . The main tumulus mound is on the northern peak ; it is the tallest of the mounds and is the burial place of Gaozong and Wu Zetian . Halfway up this northern peak , the builders of the site dug a 61 m ( 200 ft ) long and 4 m ( 13 ft ) wide tunnel into the rock of the mountain that leads to the inner tomb chambers located deep within the mountain . The complex was originally enclosed by two walls , the remains of which have been discovered today , including what was four gatehouses of the inner wall . The inner wall was 2 @. @ 4 m ( 7 @. @ 8 ft ) thick , with a total perimeter of 5920 m ( 19 @, @ 422 ft ) enclosing a trapezoidal area of 240 @, @ 000 m<sup>2</sup> ( 787 @, @ 400 ft<sup>2</sup> ) . Only some corner parts of the outer wall have been discovered . During the Tang dynasty , there were hundreds of residential houses that surrounded Qianling , inhabited by

families that maintained the grounds and buildings of the mausoleum . The remains of some of these houses have since been discovered . The building foundation of the timber offering hall situated at the south gate of the mausoleum 's inner wall has also been discovered .

= = Spirit Way = =

Leading into the mausoleum is a spirit way , which is flanked on both sides with stone statues like the later tombs of the Song dynasty and Ming Dynasty Tombs . The Qianling statues include horses , winged horses , horses with grooms , lions , ostriches , officials , and foreign envoys . The khan of the Western Turks presented an ostrich to the Tang court in 620 and the Tushara Kingdom sent another in 650 ; in carved reliefs of Qianling dated c . 683 , traditional Chinese phoenixes are modelled on the body of ostriches . Historian Tonia Eckfeld states that the artistic emphasis on the exotic foreign tribute of the ostrich at the mausoleum was " a sign of the greatness of China and the Chinese emperor , not of the foreigners who sent them , or of the places from which they came " . Eckfeld also asserts that the 61 statues of foreign diplomats sculpted in the 680s represents the " far @-@ reaching power and international standing " of the Tang Dynasty . These statues , now headless , represent the actual foreign diplomats who were present at Emperor Gaozong 's funeral . Historian Angela Howard notes that along the spirit ways of the auxiliary tombs ? such as Li Xianhui 's ? the statues are smaller , of lesser quality , and fewer in number than the main spirit way of Qianling leading to Emperor Gaozong and Wu 's burial . Besides the statues , there are also flanking sets of octagonal stone pillars meant to ward off evil spirits . A 6 @.@ 3 m ( 20 @.@ 7 ft ) tall , tiered stele dedicated to Emperor Gaozong is also located along the path , with a written inscription commemorating his achievements ; this is flanked by Wu Zetian 's stele which has no written inscriptions . An additional stele by the main tumulus was erected by the Qianlong Emperor ( r . 1735 ? 96 ) during the mid @-@ Qing dynasty .

= = Tombs = =

The tomb chambers of Emperor Gaozong and Empress Wu are located deep within Mount Liang , a trend that was set by Emperor Taizong ( r . 626 ? 49 ) with his burial at Mount Jiuzong . Of the 18 emperors of the Tang dynasty , 14 of these had natural mountains serving as the earthen mounds for their tombs . Only members of the imperial family were allowed to have their tombs located within natural mountains ; tombs for officials and nobles featured man @-@ made tumulus mounds and tomb chambers that were totally underground . Xinian Fu wrote that " Children of emperors were allowed tombs in the shape of truncated pyramids , but high @-@ ranking officials and lesser tomb constructors could only have conical mounds . The conical tombs of officials were allowed to have one wall surrounding it , but only one gate ? positioned to the south ? was permitted . The attendant tombs thus far excavated at Qianling feature truncated pyramid mounds above underground chambers that are approached by declining diagonal ramps with ground @-@ level entrances . There are six vertical shafts for the ramps of each of these tombs which allowed goods to be lowered into the side niches of the ramps .

The main hall in each of these underground tombs leads to two four @-@ sided brick @-@ laden burial chambers connected by a short corridor ; these chambers feature domed ceilings . The tomb of Li Xian features real fully stone doors , a tomb trend apparent in the Han and Western Jin dynasties that became more common by the time of the Northern Qi dynasty . The stylistic stone door of Lou Rui 's tomb of 570 closely resembles that of Tang stone doors , such as the one in Li Xian 's tomb .

Unlike many other Tang dynasty tombs , the treasures within the imperial tombs of the Qianling Mausoleum were never stolen by grave robbers . In fact , in Li Chongrun 's tomb alone , there were found over a thousand items of gold , copper , iron , ceramic figurines , three @-@ glaze colored figurines , and three @-@ glaze pottery wares . Altogether , the tombs of Li Xian , Li Chongrun , and Li Xianhui had over 4 @,@ 300 tomb articles when they were unearthed by archaeologists . However , the attendant tombs of the mausoleum were raided by grave robbers . Among the

ceramic figurines found in Li Chongrun 's tomb were horses with gilt decoration supporting armed and armored soldiers , horsemen playing flutes , blowing trumpets , and waving whips to spur their horses . Ceramic sculptures found in the tomb of Li Xian included figurines of civil officials , warriors , and tomb guardian beasts , all of which were over a meter ( 3 ft ) in height .

= = Murals = =

The tombs thus far excavated for Li Xian , Li Chongrun , and Li Xianhui are all decorated with mural paintings and feature multiple shaft entrances and arched chambers . Historian Mary H. Fong states that the tomb murals in the subterranean halls of Li Xián 's , Li Chongrun 's , and Li Xianhui 's tombs are representative of anonymous but professional tomb decorators rather than renowned court painters of handscrolls . Although primarily funerary art , Fong asserts that these Tang tomb murals are " sorely needed references " to the sparse amount of description offered in Tang era documents about painting , such as the Tang Chao minghua lu ( ' Celebrated Painters of the Tang Dynasty ' ) by Zhu Jingxuan in the 840s and the Lidai Minghua ji ( ' A Record of the Famous Painters of the Successive Dynasties ' ) by Zhang Yanyuan in 847 . Fong also asserts that the painting skill of portraying " animation through spirit consonance " or qiyun shendong ? an art critique associated with renowned Tang dynasty painters like Yan Liben , Zhou Fang , and Chen Hong ? was achieved by the anonymous Tang dynasty tomb painters . Fong writes :

The " Palace Guard " and the " Two Seated Attendants " from Prince Zhang Huai 's tomb are especially outstanding in this respect . Not only are the relative differences in age achieved , but it is evident that the robust guard officer who stands at attention displays an attitude of respectful self @-@ assurance ; and the seated pair are deeply engrossed in a serious conversation .

Another important feature in the murals of the tomb was the representation of architecture . Although there are numerous examples of existing Tang stone and brick pagoda towers for architectural historians to examine , there are only six remaining wooden halls that have survived from the 8th and 9th centuries . Only the rammed earth foundations of the great palaces of the Tang capital at Chang 'an have survived . However , some of the mural scenes of timber architecture in Li Chongrun 's tomb at Qianling have been suggested by historians as representative of the Eastern Palace , residence of the crown prince during the Tang dynasty . According to historian Fu Xinian , not only do the murals of Li Chongrun 's tomb represent buildings of the Tang capital , but also " the number of underground chambers , ventilation shafts , compartments , and air wells have been seen as indications of the number of courtyards , main halls , rooms , and corridors in residences of tomb occupants when they were alive . " The underground hall of the descending ramp approaching Li Chongrun 's tomb chambers , as well as the gated entrance to the front chamber , feature murals of multiple @-@ bodied que gate towers similar to those whose foundations were surveyed at Chang 'an .

Ann Paludan , an Honorary Fellow of Durham University , provides captions in her Chronicle of the Chinese Emperors ( 1998 ) for the following pictures of Qianling tomb murals :