WHAT CAN FINGERPRINTS TELL US ABOUT WHO BUILT CHINA'S TERRACOTTA ARMY?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

China's Terracotta Army contains about 8,000 life-sized clay figures buried near the tomb of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China. The soldiers were made more than 2,000 years ago and were meant to protect the emperor in the afterlife. A new study has examined 79 fingerprints left on 36 of the figures. The researchers believe that about 45 percent of the prints came from adult women, while 22 percent came from young people under 15. This challenges the old idea that the army was made only by adult men. The evidence is not perfect. The study looked at just one of three pits, and one person may have worked on several statues. However, written records from the Qin dynasty also suggest that women and children took part in state-controlled craft work.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

The Terracotta Army is not only a collection of soldiers. It also gives clues about how the Qin state organised work and controlled millions of people. The fingerprints suggest that women and children may have played a larger role in building the emperor's enormous underground world than historians once believed.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"Why might women and children have worked on the emperor's army?"

Source: Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/did-women-and-children-collaborate-with-male-artisans-to-create-chinas-terra-cotta-army-fingerprints-left-on-the-200