NEW YORK, JULY 14, 2016 – New technology and the opening of previously closed societies are ushering in a golden age of archaeology, uncovering the secrets of some of history’s most famous empires. Smithsonian Channel has gained access to some remarkable discoveries, and will reveal new insights in a major new programming block: BEHIND THE LOST EMPIRES. The block features specials on the lost city of Pompeii, a recently discovered Roman gladiator school in the heart of Europe, China’s Han Dynasty and its infamous female Emperor Wu, and Burma, the world’s first golden civilization. POMPEII: THE DEAD SPEAK kicks off BEHIND THE LOST EMPIRES on Monday, August 8 at 8 p.m. ET/PT.

BUILDING THE LOST EMPIRES schedule:

POMPEII: THE DEAD SPEAK
Premieres Monday, August 8 at 8 p.m. ET/PT
Its ghostly forms speak to an ancient horror, a volcanic eruption in 79 A.D. that simultaneously destroyed and froze in time the bustling Roman town of Pompeii. It is one of the world’s most iconic sites – an ancient city that has revealed more about everyday Roman life than anywhere else. Yet, over the years, many stories, myths and untruths have grown around the victims of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Now, for the first time, Pompeii’s iconic casts are undergoing a major forensic study. A team of forensic scientists employs cutting-edge technology to peer beneath the plaster and study the bones locked within. CT scans and digital X-rays allow the scientists to reveal
surprising clues to who these people were and how they lived two thousand years ago. And the latest laser mapping technology is enabling them to create the most accurate, detailed 3-D map of Pompeii ever made.

**LOST CITY OF GLADIATORS**
**Premieres Monday, August 15 at 8 p.m. ET/PT**
Along a green and peaceful stretch of the Danube River in Austria, archaeologists have made a startling find: the remains of the only school for gladiators ever discovered outside of Rome. This was once the site of the ancient megacity Carnuntum. It was a great trading metropolis and a strategic military base protecting the northern borders of the Roman Empire until the city was abandoned and nature reclaimed the landscape. Apart from a couple of big ruins, the ancient city is invisible to the naked eye. But Wolfgang Neubauer of Vienna’s Ludwig Boltzmann Institute has developed new techniques to trace underground remains using aerial photos, magnetometers and ground-penetrating radar to make them visible on a computer screen. Combining this new imagery with strategic excavation, Neubauer reconstructs the world of the gladiators – how they fought, what they ate, and the toll wrought by battle. 3-D mapping even reveals a spectacle that would look very familiar to modern sports fans: an alley of vendors selling food and souvenirs on the way to the coliseum.

**RAIDERS OF THE JADE EMPIRE**
**Premieres Monday, August 22 at 8 p.m. ET/PT**
While Rome dominated Western Europe and the Mediterranean, the Han dynasty ruled the East, bringing a lasting identity to the country and people of China. They left behind incredible treasures of jade, sculpture, gold and silk. Unfortunately for modern investigators, tomb raiders long ago made off with many of the Han’s greatest treasures. Now, three spectacular royal tombs offer scientists a chance to examine artifacts the raiders left behind or never found – treasures that show the source of the Han’s wealth and power and reveal their ideas on life and death. With exclusive access to a rare opening of a Han dynasty tomb in Xuzhou in northeast China, this special reveals the secrets of the dynasty that made the nation. Among the extraordinary finds is a jade mummy made up of over 4,000 pieces of the precious stone.

**CHINA’S EMPEROR OF EVIL**
**Premieres Monday, August 29 at 8 p.m. ET/PT**
Emperor Wu rose from a lowly concubine to become one of the most powerful women in history - the absolute ruler of China in the late 600s – and the only woman ever to dare call herself “Emperor.” She had a bad reputation as a ruthless tyrant and murderer who killed her own child, but was she a victim of the type of sexual politics that brand women political leaders unfairly? Now archaeologists are piecing together a new story as they excavate tombs, palaces and monuments. When Europe was plunged into the Dark Ages, Emperor Wu’s China was expanding the Silk Road, building sophisticated trade networks, and creating one of the first truly cosmopolitan cities in the world. Extraordinary artifacts – such as the Phoenix Crown, a priceless headdress glittering with pearls, gold and turquoise – reveal clues to the success of Emperor Wu’s 50-year reign. By the end, this indomitable woman in a male-dominated world had transformed
China into a global superpower. This program does nothing less than call for her reassessment in history.

WONDERS OF BURMA
Premieres Monday, September 5 at 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. ET/PT

For decades, the Southeast Asian nation of Myanmar was ruled by a military junta, closed off from the world and shrouded in mythological mystery. Few from the West traveled there, and even fewer understood the incredibly rich history within its borders. This two-part special gained unprecedented access to the world's first golden civilization, previously known as Burma and before that as the Kingdom of Bagan. It is the home of 4 million temples and three great treasures, each of which is made of gold: two astonishingly beautiful pagodas and a statue that is said to bear the true likeness of Buddha from 2,500 years ago. WONDERS OF BURMA follows this trail of gold to uncover the founding legends of the nation. The glittering world of the Kingdom of Bagan is brought back to life with spectacular animation, while experts explore how the philosophy of Buddhism left an enduring impact that would travel far beyond Burma.

Smithsonian Channel™, owned by Smithsonian Networks™, a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution, is where curiosity lives, inspiration strikes and wonders never cease. This is the place for awe-inspiring stories, powerful documentaries and amazing entertainment across multiple platforms. Smithsonian Channel combines the storytelling prowess of SHOWTIME® with the unmatched resources and rich traditions of the Smithsonian, to create award-winning programming that shines new light on popular genres such as air and space, history, science, nature, and pop culture. Among the network’s offerings are series including Aerial America, Million Dollar American Princesses, The Weapon Hunter, Mighty Ships, Mighty Planes and Air Disasters, as well as critically-acclaimed specials that include Civil War 360, 9/11: The Heartland Tapes; MLK: The Assassination Tapes and The Day Kennedy Died. Smithsonian Networks also operates Smithsonian Earth™, through SN Digital LLC., a new subscription video streaming service delivering spectacular original nature and wildlife content. To learn more, go to www.smithsonianchannel.com, or connect with us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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