Visitors examine the exhibition carefully.

Huanggang celebrates life and works of Su Dongpo

The ancient artist and poet is honored in a new museum

By ZHIBAN TII

Huanggang, in Hubei province, recently opened the Memorial Museum of Su Dongpo (1036-1101), famed Song Dynasty (960-1279) poet, artist, calligrapher, pharmacologist and statesman.

Born in Meishan near Mount Emei in Sichuan province, Su’s exact writings are of great value to contemporary understandings of 11th century Chinese travel literature and the tea industry.

Formerly known as Su Shi, the multi-talented artist was often at odds with a political faction headed by Prime Minister Wang Anshi. He once wrote a poem criticizing Wang’s reforms, notably a government monopoly on the salt industry.

Banished to Huanggang, now Huanggang in Hubei province, he occupied a lowly government post and stopped writing. Near pension, he built himself a small residence on Dongpo (Eastern Slope) farm, from which he took his literary pseudonym and drew much of his artistic inspiration.

His most famous piece of calligraphy, Han Shi Tie, was written at Dongpo. He died at the age of 66 in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, in 1101.

Post-mortem popularity

After word of his death spread, people began fervently collecting Su’s calligraphy and paintings. They created stone inscriptions marking his visits to numerous places and built shrines in his honor.

Although he only dwelled in the settlement for four years, his legacy will live on in the city forever. His story is told in a stand set up in front of a projector that shows the digitally rendered helm of a boat navigating the waters near a cliff. The simulation allows visitors to pretend they are Su paddling along the river to his home near Chibi.

Huanggang Mayor Liu Xuerong (second from left) introduces an exhibit to visitors.

It was about the settlement’s Red Cliff that he authored his best-known piece of prose, Chihitu (Red Cliff: Rhapodary). The work commemorates the fierce battle at Red Cliff (AD 208-209) in which the vastly outnumbered forces of the southern warlords Liu Bei and Sun Quan cunningly unbalanced the massive military might of northern general Cao Cao. The victory sustained the collapsing Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 220-280).

Su’s ode to the victory is essential reading for the country’s primary school students. Su died at the age of 66 in Changzhou, Jiangsu province.

Huanggang’s newly opened Memorial Museum of Su Dongpo

Huanggang’s newly opened Memorial Museum of Su Dongpo attracts a large number of visitors from home and abroad.

Huanggang Mayor Liu Xuerong (second from left) introduces an exhibit to visitors.

View of the Dabie mountain range.

Su spent only four years in Huangzhou before returning to the capital to witness the creation of a new government. He was later banished to Huizhou in Guangdong province and again to Danzhou in Hainan island that it was in Huanggang that Su reached his literary zenith. There, he wrote most of his 2,300 poems and 800 surviving letters.

It was about the settlement’s Red Cliff that he authored his best-known piece of prose, Chihitu (Red Cliff: Rhapodary). The work commemorates the fierce battle at Red Cliff (AD 208-209) in which the vastly outnumbered forces of the southern warlords Liu Bei and Sun Quan cunningly unbalanced the massive military might of northern general Cao Cao. The victory sustained the collapsing Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 220-280).

Su’s ode to the victory is essential reading for the country’s primary school students.

Su died at the age of 66 in Changzhou, Jiangsu province.

Huanggang Mayor Liu Xuerong (second from left) introduces an exhibit to visitors.

It was about the settlement’s Red Cliff that he authored his best-known piece of prose, Chihitu (Red Cliff: Rhapodary). The work commemorates the fierce battle at Red Cliff (AD 208-209) in which the vastly outnumbered forces of the southern warlords Liu Bei and Sun Quan cunningly unbalanced the massive military might of northern general Cao Cao. The victory sustained the collapsing Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 220-280).

Su’s ode to the victory is essential reading for the country’s primary school students.

Su died at the age of 66 in Changzhou, Jiangsu province.

Huanggang Mayor Liu Xuerong (second from left) introduces an exhibit to visitors.

It was about the settlement’s Red Cliff that he authored his best-known piece of prose, Chihitu (Red Cliff: Rhapodary). The work commemorates the fierce battle at Red Cliff (AD 208-209) in which the vastly outnumbered forces of the southern warlords Liu Bei and Sun Quan cunningly unbalanced the massive military might of northern general Cao Cao. The victory sustained the collapsing Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 220-280).

Su’s ode to the victory is essential reading for the country’s primary school students.

Su died at the age of 66 in Changzhou, Jiangsu province.

Huanggang Mayor Liu Xuerong (second from left) introduces an exhibit to visitors.

It was about the settlement’s Red Cliff that he authored his best-known piece of prose, Chihitu (Red Cliff: Rhapodary). The work commemorates the fierce battle at Red Cliff (AD 208-209) in which the vastly outnumbered forces of the southern warlords Liu Bei and Sun Quan cunningly unbalanced the massive military might of northern general Cao Cao. The victory sustained the collapsing Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 220-280).

Su’s ode to the victory is essential reading for the country’s primary school students.

Su died at the age of 66 in Changzhou, Jiangsu province.

Huanggang Mayor Liu Xuerong (second from left) introduces an exhibit to visitors.

It was about the settlement’s Red Cliff that he authored his best-known piece of prose, Chihitu (Red Cliff: Rhapodary). The work commemorates the fierce battle at Red Cliff (AD 208-209) in which the vastly outnumbered forces of the southern warlords Liu Bei and Sun Quan cunningly unbalanced the massive military might of northern general Cao Cao. The victory sustained the collapsing Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 220-280).

Su’s ode to the victory is essential reading for the country’s primary school students.

Su died at the age of 66 in Changzhou, Jiangsu province.

Huanggang Mayor Liu Xuerong (second from left) introduces an exhibit to visitors.

It was about the settlement’s Red Cliff that he authored his best-known piece of prose, Chihitu (Red Cliff: Rhapodary). The work commemorates the fierce battle at Red Cliff (AD 208-209) in which the vastly outnumbered forces of the southern warlords Liu Bei and Sun Quan cunningly unbalanced the massive military might of northern general Cao Cao. The victory sustained the collapsing Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 220-280).

Su’s ode to the victory is essential reading for the country’s primary school students.

Su died at the age of 66 in Changzhou, Jiangsu province.