



Zhou Qiang (center), Hunan's provincial Party secretary, showing his appreciation for the local culture industry.



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The Yuelu Academy, the nation's only Confucian academy to stay in continuous operation over the past thousand years.

Developing a cultural province

CULTURAL HUNAN

By FENG ZHIWEI AND WANG YANYUN

The force of culture in China, as well as its influence, are stronger than ever, and no place is in a better position to demonstrate this than the province of Hunan, with its thousands of years of cultural history, according to Zhou Qiang, the provincial Party secretary of Hunan.

In fact, Hunan had already come up with the idea of developing into a "cultural province" as early as 2006. And, since then, it has come up with some original cultural phenomena on its own. Some of its entertainment programs have become so popular that Hunan TV programs have young adults who are die-hard fans.

And, although its TV programs account for only a small part of the province's cultural output, there are signs its TV programs have even gained recognition outside Hunan.

Moreover, the heads of some TV stations in more than a dozen countries came to Hunan on Oct 25 to get a look at the entire photographic production process was handled by Hunan's TV Station, which is famous for its programs.

From 2006 to 2010, Hunan had 31 of the 222 cultural brands named in a Cultural Brands of China Report, or 14 percent. This year, it ranks first in the cultural brands of China list, with 25.

Because it is landlocked, Hunan has no special geographical advantage, or political, financial, or technological, for that matter. So, how could it be so energetic in its cultural development,

even to the degree of being a model of other provinces?

Well, innovation, for one thing. It is an important factor in cultural development and Hunan has been bold enough and brave enough to try to keep innovating. That may be the key to its success.

Some of the heads of TV stations in Hunan have been decisive in trying to improve their situation, and have taken new steps in advertising and in promoting their products.

But innovation alone cannot guarantee success in culture; capital is also needed and, in some ways, may even be more important.

Gong Shuguang, the head of the Hunan Publication Group, maintains that, "Difficulty in raising fund can impede the development of the culture industry. It's not possible for a culture business to get bigger without the support of capital."

Obviously then, the development of that industry depends on the support of a well developed financial system, and Hunan officials have been quite clear about that. And, many companies in the business have been trying to go public to raise fund from the capital market.

To encourage the culture industry to connect up with capital, Zhou said, the government has tried to provide some opportunities, for example, by asking non-governmental organizations with capital to invest in culture industries. To support this move, it has come up with policies to further the cooperation.

Certainly, one thing that might help that capital-raising effort is the fact that the audience ratings of Hunan's TV programs have been in the No



LU RUIHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

It's a splendid culture: members of the Tujia ethnic group in Hunan putting on an exuberant performance.

1 slot, among all provincial TV programs across China, for eight years running.

And, the Hunan Publication Group has been on the Top 500 list of Chinese companies for five years, and among the Top 50 cultural businesses, for four years.

From 2006 to 2010, the average annual growth of the province's culture industry was about 20 percent. By 2008, it had an income of more than 100 billion yuan (\$15.8 billion), making its culture industry a pillar for the province.

In 2010, its income amounted to 186.8 billion yuan, an increase of 82.7 billion yuan over 2009.

Meanwhile, local government officials have empha-

sized the construction of culture industry facilities to serve the public, with greater attention being given to non-profit cultural undertakings, for example, in education, entertainment, and books.

In 2010, several of its universities joined hands to combine education with non-profit businesses to make students more aware of the need for public service and to give them a sense of social responsibility.

This innovation has helped to improve the public service side of culture, and the government has tried to provide more for people in the countryside through its "TV and Radio Broadcasts in Every Household" and "Digital Films in the Village" projects.

In this way, people in the countryside can also immerse themselves in culture, which, in turn, promotes the overall development of Hunan.

Still, without a guiding strategy, Hunan's culture industry would not really have gotten so far, so fast.

The government first came up with a strategy — "How to Become a Province that is Characterized by Culture" — in 2006, and it has stuck to that program these past several years.

From 2010 on, it has set aside 100 million yuan annually for cultural undertakings, resulting in some vigorous development.

And, in the same way capital is a kind of impetus for cultural development, the same

is true of talent. So, Hunan is paying more attention to talent searches and creation. Estimates put the number of people specializing in culture in Hunan, as of July 2011, at 1.15 million. These talented people are expected to be of great help in its overall cultural development.

This means that Hunan's prosperity is tied to cultural prosperity, so Hunan will continue with its cultural development effort.

By 2015, it expects the culture industry's income to reach 390 billion yuan, which would surely be great news for Hunan. It means that this pillar industry, with all its vigor, will be able to promote the development of other sectors in the province.

The provincial government developed its policy of "Developing a cultural economy and building a cultural province" in 1989.

In 2001, it came up with a "Developing the culture industry and building a strong cultural province" strategy. Under the 10th Five-Year Plan (2001-2005), it came out with the "Plan on the Culture Industry of Hunan from 2001 to 2010" report.

In November 2006, the "Strong cultural province" concept was the force behind its blueprint for a stronger province, described at in the 9th Provincial Congress.

In July 2009, it publicized the "Further strengthening support of the financial system to promote cultural development" report, with four major aspects — strengthening financial support, improving banking services, promoting culture industry financing, and establishing an overall policy system.

In December 2009, it stated that cultural industrial development had two characteristics — economizing on resources, and being environmentally friendly.

In February 2010, it announced a program that emphasized the sound development of a free culture industry.

In August 2010, it announced a plan for developing new types of industries, with culture listed as one of seven strategic, new industries.

In October 2011, Hunan reiterated the importance of its report made to the 17th Communist Party of China Central Committee, which emphasized the need to reform the cultural system to promote cultural development nationwide.



Lu Jianping (left), director of the Hunan Pendency Department, and Gong Shuguang, head of the Hunan Publication Group, sounding a gong to celebrate the group's going public.



The latest work from Hunan's animation and comics industry — Rainbow Cat and Blue Rabbit's Adventures in Dreamland.



The Rise of the Hunan Army, published in the province.