

Province goes all out to protect cultural heritage

By **JU CHUANJIANG**
and **ZHAO RUIXUE**

Thanks to local government efforts to protect and preserve intangible cultural heritages, visitors to Shandong province can see numerous traditional folk arts and skills.

"It is because of the cultural heritages, our cities have become what they are now," said Xu Xianghong, head of the Shandong provincial cultural department.

"Inherited for generations, the intangible cultural heritages are endangered. They should be protected and developed to serve people," Xu said.

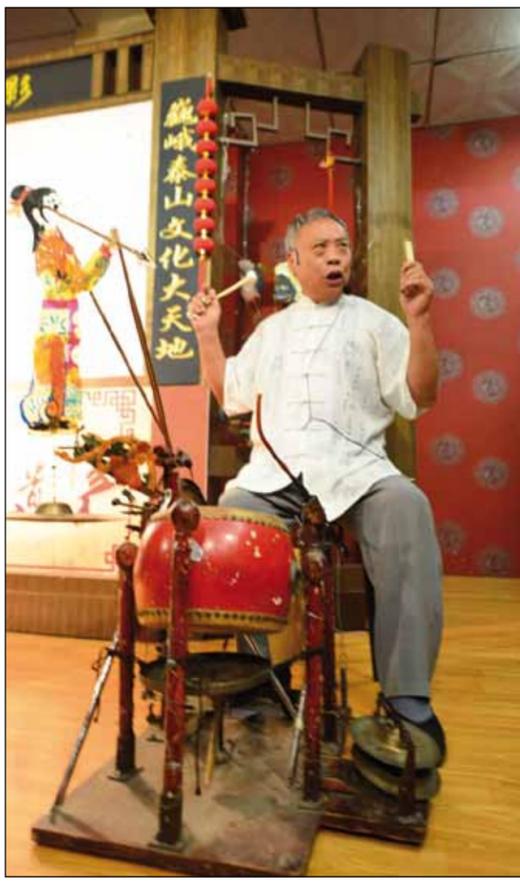
Shandong has 153 national-level intangible cultural heritages. An additional 555 are listed as provincial-level, a further 1,957 are city-level and 7,019 more are county-level, according to statistics from the provincial cultural department.

Eight items, including paper cutting in Yantai and shadow puppetry in Tai'an, were put on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and 60 people were nominated as national-level representative inheritors of intangible cultural heritages.

"We are carrying out a series of measures to protect these intangible cultural heritages as many are on the verge of dying away," said Li Guolin, deputy head of the provincial cultural department.

To ensure intangible cultural heritages are passed on, Shandong launched a project to save related materials. The province also carries out training programs to attract younger people to learn traditional skills.

About 1,300 training classes



JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

A senior folk artist shows how to skillfully perform shadow puppets.

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were held for those interested in intangible cultural heritages, through which represent-

tive inheritors found 12,390 apprentices by the end of 2013. More than 1,100 museums

and rooms were established across the province to provide places to learn intangible cultural heritages.

A paper cutting museum at Yantai Mountain is a landmark in the coastal city Yantai, where paper cutting inheritor Zhu Manhua shows the skill to tourists.

A research center for shadow puppetry built in Tai'an, a city famous for being home to Taishan Mountain, has become a platform for spreading Taishan Mountain-related culture.

To promote the overall protection of intangible cultural heritages, Shandong built one national-level protective zone and eight province-level zones.

More than 4,400 activities were held during the past two years to help raise awareness of protecting intangible cultural heritages.

One of them was the biennial China Intangible Cultural Heritage Exposition, which was held twice in Shandong province. The third expo, which finished on Monday in Jinan, the capital of Shandong, displayed about 700 items related to intangible cultural heritages.

"Intangible cultural heritages not only enrich people's lives, but also promote the cultural industry and tourism," Li said.

To date, Shandong has had more than 1.28 million people involved in running businesses related to cultural heritages, which generated 18.9 billion yuan (\$3.09 billion) in revenue last year.

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Shandong rich in ancient cities

By **WANG QIAN**
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As one of the important cradles of Chinese civilization, Shandong province in East China is home to 10 national historical and cultural cities, each with their own distinctive features.

"History and culture is the soul of a city as well as the core of urban soft power. The rich historical and cultural resources provide strong advantages and lasting power for urban development," said Xie Zhixiu, head of the Cultural Relics Bureau of Shandong.

"Although urbanization is an important topic in China's contemporary development, urban construction should coexist harmoniously with historical and cultural heritage," Xie said.

Qufu was approved as one of the country's first national famous historical and cultural cities in 1982. Shandong now has ten national famous historical and cultural cities, which ranks the province second in the country.

The culture-rich cities on the list are the provincial capital Jinan, Liaocheng, Tai'an, Qufu, Zoucheng, Linzi, Qingzhou, as well as the coastal cities of Penglai, Yantai and Qingdao.

The cities each feature different charms.

As the capital of Lu, a vassal state of the Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-256 BC), Qufu is known as the hometown of the famous philosopher Confucius. The city draws millions of tourists from all around the world each year with its numerous cultural relics and historical sites, such as the Confucius Temple complex.

Chinese archaeologists and history buffs are particularly fond of Linzi, where large



JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

At the Confucian Temple in Qufu, Shandong province, a ritual takes place in commemoration of renowned ancient philosopher Confucius.

ancient burial sites were discovered. Now a district of Zibo, Linzi was the capital of Qi, one of the most powerful states during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and the following Warring States Period (475-221 BC) for more than 800 years.

Statistics from the local cultural relics bureau showed more than 300 historical sites, 150 large ancient tombs and numerous valuable cultural relics were unearthed in the area, which earned it a reputation as an "underground museum".

Tai'an is known for Taishan Mountain, which was described by UNESCO as a world-renowned treasure house of history and culture. During a 3,000-year span, emperors, poets and scholars made pilgrimages to Mount Taishan to pray to the gods, leaving behind more than 2000 inscriptions and stone tablets.

Located at the foot of the mountain, the Dai Temple, which is the largest and best-preserved structure on Taishan, is another must see. Built in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), it is where emperors paid their respects to the gods.

Tiankuang Hall, the temple's main structure, houses a giant Taoist mural that is 3.3 meters high and 62 meters long and depicts the god of Taishan Mountain on an inspection tour. The mural details forests, palaces, bridges, riding beasts and 630 people and is considered a rare piece of art.

To protect and display the numerous cultural relics many museums have been built in the key cities. These include a kite museum in Weifang, the Grand Canal Museum in Liaocheng, as well as the Ancient Chinese Car Museum and the Qi State Historical Museum in Linzi.

The museums attract increasing numbers of visitors and researchers and also promote international cultural exchanges.

They host exhibitions overseas in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan and South Korea.

The cities' authorities want to use their culture and history to appeal more to tourists. More than 100 cultural festivals and activities are held in the key cities every year, which attract a total of more than 200 million visitors.

Arts industry thrives in painting city

By **JU CHUANJIANG**
and **WANG QIAN**

The Shandong city of Weifang is drawing on its rich cultural resources and strong arts scene to boost the development of its painting and calligraphy industry.

Weifang hosts thousands of painting and calligraphy exhibitions and auctions annually and was named China's Paintings City by the Chinese Painting Institute last April.

"Weifang has become a famed art center for painting and calligraphy works creation, display and trading," Liu Dawei, chairman of the China Artists Association said at a national painting and calligraphy fair in Qingzhou, part of Weifang, last month.

The annual fair showcased more than 2,000 paintings and calligraphic works by Chinese contemporary art masters.

"The fair will play a more and more important role in revitalizing Chinese traditional art and making Chinese paintings flourish in overseas markets," he said.

Since 2010 the Chinese Painting Festival has been held every year and overall transactions at the event totaled 2.86 billion yuan (\$467.04 million).

This year's festival displayed more than 10,000 paintings and calligraphic works in a 45,000-square-meter exhibition area and featured 10 sections, including one for overseas famous Chinese paintings.

The event also showed classic paintings by 60 council members from the Chinese Painting Institute. These included one unique piece that stretches 220 meters in length and stands 1.45 meters tall named *The Great Yellow*

River, which was created by more than 30 artists throughout the course of a year.

"Endowed with rich historical and cultural legacies, Weifang has a good cultural and art ambience," said Chu Baojie, head of the city's publicity department.

The city has fostered numerous famous artists since the Tang and Song dynasties (618-1279), including Zhang Zeduan, a painter during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) who created the famous scroll painting *Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival*. Today the city still has thousands of professional painters and more than 10,000 amateur ones.

Weifang is home to more than 2,000 art galleries, which hold thousands of exhibitions of paintings, calligraphic works and other artworks annually.

The city is also a trading hub for paintings and calligraphic works in North China, Chu said. More than three million art works are sold in the city every year, which brings in more than 12 billion yuan in revenue.

Nine art markets have been established in Qingzhou, an area in Weifang city, alone, and they generated about 10 billion yuan in combined revenue last year.

"Common people also tend to collect paintings and calligraphic works in Weifang and see it as a good way to pursue spiritual life," said Fu Xiaoquan, owner of a local art gallery.

"Another bonus is that it may be a perfect investment as the Chinese painting collection market heats up," said Fu, whose gallery now sells as much as 100 million yuan worth works annually.

Due to the government's



WANG QIAN / CHINA DAILY

A group of Weifang residents perform story-telling tambourine songs, a traditional folk art of the Manchu ethnic group.



JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

At this year's Chinese Painting Festival, more than 1,000 art works are on display in Qingzhou.

emphasis on the industry, more than 4,000 culture-related enterprises have settled in Weifang, and their combined capital surpassed 40 billion yuan. They have invested in construction of cultural and creativity parks, as well as painting exhibitions

and creation bases. Beijing's Poly International Auction Company and Rongbaozhai Art Store, one of the most influential auction houses in China, is building branches in Weifang, said Chu. He added that the city fostered a complete art

industrial line ranging from works creation and exhibition to evaluation, auction and trading.

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Qingzhou's Ming and Qing dynasty styles preserved

By **ZHAO RUIXUE**
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Visitors to the ancient town of Qingzhou in Weifang, Shandong province can enjoy Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) buildings and try 17 folk arts, which are listed as intangible cultural heritages.

Qingzhou's government spends 2 million yuan (\$326,491.6) every year organizing 80 inheritors to practice the folk arts, which have made the city a popular tourist destination.

Statistics from Qingzhou's tourism office showed more than 1.19 million tourists visited the city during the National Day holiday, a year-on-year increase of 44.8 percent. The visitors generated 1.41 billion yuan for the city, a 17.92 percent increase year-on-year.

Qingzhou has a population of less than 1 million people and was one of the nine large administrative regions in ancient China for more than 1,600 years.

A number of old buildings and communities in the city showcase the architectural styles of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Since 2011, the local government has run a program to preserve and develop the historical sites.

The city collected historical materials, which total 2 million words, more than 300 video clips and 400 objects that are related to the ancient culture.

The local government invited the National Research Center of Historical Cities at Shanghai's Tongji University to draft a plan for protecting, renovating and rebuilding Qing-

2 million yuan
in annual government spending to support inheritors to practice folk arts

19.8 sq km
architectural relic protection zone in the city center

zhou's ancient remains. About 19.8 square kilometers in the city center was designated as a protected zone for architectural relics.

To date, the city has invested 2 billion yuan in renovating relics. Structures such as a mosque, a church and the ancient city walls have been restored.

Projects to renovate and rebuild Wannian Bridge, from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Dongmen Street, from the Ming Dynasty, and Ouyuan Street, from the Qing Dynasty, were completed and are now popular tourist sites.

The government has also made efforts to preserve endangered intangible cultural heritage practices including the traditional game *kongzhu*, clay sculpture, shuttlecock making and the ancient music instrument *cuoqin*.

To make visits to all the heritage sites easier, the local government created 22 bike stations where 300 bikes are available to rent. There are also five bus stations.

Museums, snacks, souvenir stalls, inns and antique and painting markets also enrich life in the ancient town.