Relocated Shandong museum proves a success

Huge number of cultural collections and exhibits draws 1 million visitors from home and abroad each year. Zhang Zhao reports.

Since its opening in 2010, the relocated Shandong Museum has welcomed more than 10 million visitors from home and abroad each year. With prominent exhibits, advanced equipment and first-class service, the museum has become a major platform for cultural exchanges in Shandong province.

Founded in 1954, the museum is the first provincial comprehensive museum in the People’s Republic of China. It was built on the Guangning Yuan, which was built in Jinan city in 1904 by British Baptist missionary John Sutherland Wright and was one of the earliest museums in China.

The new location of the museum is the largest of all provincial museums in the nation. It houses more than 200,000 cultural collections, including 1,063 Class A relics.

The museum is a national leader in its collections of stone Buddha statues, pictorial stones, pottery and porcelain, bronzeware, bamboo slips, calligraphic paintings and ancient fossils.

Shandong is one of the cradles of the Chinese civilization. Neolithic cultures, such as the Dawenkou and Longshan cultures, existed in the region between 8,500 and 4,000 years ago. Pottery from those pre-historical civilizations are a highlight exhibition in the museum.

Dawenkou pottery was vividly molded and features various colors and patterns. One of its best-known pieces is a red-color zoomorphic pot.

The eggshell black pottery cup was unearthed in Taian city in 1959. Used as a water or food container, it is shaped like a pig with thick and strong limbs with a short, upturned tail. It features a handle on its back and a filling tube near the tail.

The eggshell black pottery cup from the Longshan culture is as thin as paper but as hard as porcelain.

Bamboo slips were another main way to write in early China before paper was invented. Shandong Museum discovered two tombs from the early Han Dynasty in 1972 in Linyi city, and found more than 7,600 bamboo slips, which are mainly used for divination in the late Shang Dynasty (c.16th century-11th century BC), the inscriptions cover a wide range of content, including politics, religion, military affairs, economy and social activities.

Shandong Museum has a collection of more than 10,000 pieces of such scripts, which were unearthed from the Yinxu Ruins, the archeological site of the capital of Shang. They were donated by a number of collectors worldwide.

One of the pieces, made of an ox shoulder blade, still preserves the red color painted on thousands of years ago. The content of the script is about the king of Shang inquiring if it was going to rain. The character for rain is vividly inscribed like rain drops. Bamboo slips were another main way to write in

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