

Shandong welcomes 'historians Olympics'

International Congress of Historical Sciences to be hosted in Asia for its first time

By WANG QIAN
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Shandong, the home province of famous Chinese philosophers Confucius and Mencius, is welcoming thousands of historians from around the world this month.

"Just as Confucius said 2,500 years ago, 'How delightful it was to have friends coming from afar', we warmly welcome scholars for the upcoming 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences," said Guo Shuqing, the governor of Shandong.

The conference has taken place every five years since 1900 and enjoys a reputation as the "Olympics of historians". This year's event will open in Jinan, the capital of Shandong, on Aug 23 and more than 2,600 scholars from 88 countries and regions will have in-depth discussions on historical science issues in six cities during the following seven days.

"The world's most influential academic event on historical sciences, the conference is being held in an Asian country for the first time in the past 100 years. We will seize the opportunity to raise Shandong's international image and showcase its long history and profound culture to the world," Guo said.

A peninsula between

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the Bohai and Yellow seas, Shandong has a land area of 156,700 square kilometers and a coastline of 3,024 km. It is endowed with abundant natural resources including gold, coal, petroleum and gypsum.

Shandong is one of China's important agricultural bases, with its yields of grain, cotton, vegetables and aquatic products all leading the nation.

The geographical and natural advantages create great development potential for the province with a population of 91.25 million. Local government statistics show that last year, the province's

GDP totaled 5.94 trillion yuan (\$928.7 billion), an increase of 8.7 percent from 2013, making it China's third-largest economy.

Shandong also boasts a long history and fascinating culture. It is not only the birthplace of Confucius and Mencius but also of Sun Tzu — the author of *The Art of War*.

"Shandong is one of the birthplaces of Chinese civilization," said Fang Hui, head of the school of history and culture at Shandong University. The university is one of sponsors and hosts of this year's international congress of historical sciences.

"Confucianism and other philosophies developed by ancient sages here have played an important role in China's history and have a great influence on world civilization," Fang said.

Shandong has 10 nationally renowned historical and cultural cities, which ranks the province second in the country. They are Jinan, Liaocheng, Tai'an, Qufu, Zoucheng, Linzi, Qingzhou, Penglai, Yantai and Qingdao.

"During the weeklong congress, we will have six themed discussions in Jinan — the main venue — and another five historical and cultural cities, to display their unique culture and history to the world," Fang said.



A ceremony is held at the Confucius Temple in the philosopher's hometown of Qufu to honor China's ancient sage. JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

Participants in the congress will focus on world historical and cultural heritage items in Shandong, including Mount Tai in Tai'an, the Grand Canal in Liaocheng and the Confucius Temple in Jining.

The province's rich historical

and cultural resources appeal to visitors from both home and abroad and have become the biggest selling point for its tourism industry.

Last year, Shandong received more than 450 million inbound visits, generating 580

billion yuan in revenue.

The province is now promoting 10 cultural tour attractions, including Qufu, the hometown of Confucius; Mount Tai; the Yellow River; Jinan, the "capital of springs"; and Dongping, the setting for the classic novel

Outlaws of Marsh, attributed to Shi Nai'an.

The local government is striving to build the province into an international tourist attraction, with tourism revenue expected to exceed 1 trillion yuan by 2017, doubling that of 2012.



The China-South Korea Industrial Park in Yantai will be a major destination for bilateral trade and investment cooperation, according to an FTA signed by the two countries in June.

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Industrial park expects boost from China-SK FTA

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The China-South Korea Industrial Park in Yantai, Shandong province, expects a boost as a result of a recent bilateral free trade agreement between the two countries.

According to the FTA signed in June, the China-South Korea Industrial Park and the Saemangeum Development Zone in South Korea will be the major destinations for bilateral investment and trade cooperation, with a highlight on 11 industries.

"We are trying to make the park in Yantai a model for industrial cooperation between China and South Korea," said Meng Fanli, Party chief of Yantai.

"The industrial park is targeted to become the best investment destination in China for South Korean enterprises and the largest distribution center for South Korean goods in China," Meng added.

Entrepreneurs are taking advantage of these business opportunities. More than 20 South Korea-based logistics enterprises visited Yantai in June.

Local officials in Yantai said they expect the park to become a transit hub for Chinese commodities headed to South Korea and South Korean goods coming to the Chinese mainland and Europe.

According to Yu Dong, director of the Yantai Bureau of Commerce, the park with a total area of 349 square kilometers, includes spaces for emerging industries and modern service industries, and a port economic zone.

The emerging industrial area

focuses on advanced equipment manufacturing, new energy and energy conservation, environmental protection, electronic information, marine engineering and technology and other new industries.

The port economic zone is a destination for trade, logistics and e-commerce, while the modern service industry area features finance, insurance, cultural creativity, healthcare and other service industries.

Located in the east of Shandong Peninsula and facing South Korea across the Yellow Sea, Yantai has more than 50,000 Koreans who live and work there.

Trade between Yantai and South Korea reached \$10.97 billion in 2014, up 20.2 percent year-on-year.

The city received \$200 million worth of investment from South Korea the same year, a 31 percent increase from 2013.

At present, eight Fortune 500 companies from South Korea — including LG, Doosan, GM Daewoo and Hyundai, have established branches in Yantai.

Close cooperation between the two sides makes Yantai China's largest production base for excavators, and an important production base for smartphones, automobiles and auto parts.

"The China-South Korea Industrial Park will promote the industrial upgrading of both sides," Yu Dong said.

He added that the park has helped the city attract \$5.3 billion of South Korean investments for 3,551 projects, mainly in the construction machinery, vehicle and other advanced manufacturing industries, as well as energy-saving and biotechnology sectors.

Province a birthplace of Chinese civilization

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Shandong gets its name because it is located to the east, or *dong* in Mandarin, of Taihangshan — the Taihang Mountains. It became an administrative region in 1168 AD and was named a province in the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Famed as the hometown of philosophers Confucius and Mencius, Shandong is one of the birthplaces of ancient Chinese civilization.

Relics of Neolithic cultures, including the Beixin, Dawenkou and Longshan cultures have been found in Shandong.

The earliest Chinese characters found and the country's

earliest military defense project — the Qi Wall built during the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BC) — are in the province. Shandong is also one of the birthplaces of Chinese ceramics and silk.

The Dawenkou culture site was discovered in Dawenkou township in Tai'an. Relics excavated show that pottery, stone and jade techniques were developed in that period.

Shandong also holds an important place in China's agricultural history.

Relics of grain granaries have been found at the Dawenkou site.

Three of China's four great ancient agronomy books were records of agricultural production in Shandong. The

world's earliest agricultural works, *Sisheng Zhishu*, written during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), and *Qimin Yaoshu* from 544 AD recorded agricultural production in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River basin.

During the Qin (221-206 BC) and Han Dynasties (206 BC-AD 220), Shandong was China's economic center. Linzi, Dingtao and Jining were the three major textile centers during the Han Dynasty, making Shandong one of the hubs of the ancient Silk Road.

Ceramic production in Shandong dates back to 5100 BC. Black pottery as thin as eggshells was found at the Longshan culture site. The area was

developed into China's ceramic production and sales center during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasties.

Zhao Aiguo, deputy head of the history and culture school of Shandong University, said Shandong has nurtured many great people including philosophers, strategists, medical scientists, agronomists, calligraphers and poets.

For instance, Confucius (551-479 BC) was a great thinker and educator. His thoughts still influence Asian regions including the Korean Peninsula, Japan and Vietnam. Statistics show there are more than 1,300 Confucian temples around the world.

The famous ancient military strategist Sun Wu (545-

470 BC), best known as Sun Tzu, was also a Shandong native. His book *The Art of War* is China's earliest tome on the topic. The book has been translated into dozens of languages including English, French, German and Japanese.

The long history has left Shandong many cultural legacies. The province has 10 cities that are designated national-level historical and cultural cities. The province has more than 1.35 million items of cultural relics.

Shandong also has four world cultural heritage sites. They are Taishan Mountain, the Confucius Temple complex, the Qi Wall and the Grand Canal.

Plans to take Qilu culture to overseas audiences

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With rich cultural resources, Shandong is committed to promoting its local Qilu culture internationally.

As the home of the Qi and Lu states during the Spring and Autumn (770-476 BC) and Warring States (475-221 BC) Periods, Shandong, one of the origins of Chinese civilization, was also called Qilu in ancient times.

"Being a significant part of the Chinese culture, Qilu culture should go abroad to let

more people experience the beauty of it, as part of our soft power," said Xu Xianghong, head of the Shandong provincial department of culture.

"The contribution of a nation to the world should not only be material products, but also include spiritual products," Xu added.

With that in mind, the province is speeding up the implementation of its "Qilu culture going global" strategy. Over the past three years, it has sent 428 cultural groups on exchanges to give about 3,000 artistic performances

across the world.

Local traditional music and dance performances by Shandong artists greatly impressed Southeast Asian audiences when they were shown during the Thailand-Shandong Culture Year that began in Bangkok in May.

As part of activities marking the 40th anniversary of China-Thailand diplomatic ties, the event presents a series of shows including Shandong traditional music, local operas, folk arts, cultural dialogues, forums and seminars.

"Such cultural exchange

activities will provide foreigners with the opportunity to understand both the traditional and contemporary aspects of the Qilu Culture, and promote exchanges among artists and scholars," Xu said.

Shandong's martial arts and acrobatics have won acclaim at performances worldwide and brought home many trophies. The Shandong Acrobatics Troupe has won Golden Clown awards — the world's highest prize for acrobatic performance — three times, and was invited to perform in the premiere ceremony of Disney's cartoon blockbuster *Mulan*.

As the hometown of Confucius, Shandong has fostered many world-renowned cultural brands related to the great sage, such as the Nishan Forum on World Civilizations and the World Confucian Conference.

The Nishan Forum was initiated by Xu Jialu, vice-chairman of the ninth and 10th National People's Congress, with the first held in 2010 in Nishan, Qufu city, where Confucius was born.

During last year's event, more than 130 scholars from China and abroad met in Nishan to look to ancient wisdom for innovative answers to the problems of modern society.

"The Nishan Forum has gradually gained importance and influence as an interna-

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Xu Xianghong, head of the Shandong provincial department of culture

tional platform for cultural exchanges," Xu said, adding that the forum was staged in Paris and New York in 2012, and will be held in Thailand in the second half of this year.

In addition, about 10 million yuan (\$1.56 million) is allocated by the provincial government every year to help local cultural companies and products expand overseas. By the end of 2014, Shandong had 1,305 cultural companies who exported products and services to 153 countries and regions. The foreign trade value of the province's cultural products amounted to \$287 million last year.



Artists from Shandong performed in Bangkok to show the traditional culture of the province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY