

CULTURAL JOURNEY

Editor's Note: China Daily launched Vision China in 2018 as a bridge for communication between China and the rest of the world. Focusing on developments in both China and abroad, Vision China invites well-known opinion leaders to share their ideas on a wide range of topics. The latest edition of Vision China was held on Sunday in Jinzhou, Liaoning province. Themed "Treasuring the Past, Enriching the Future", the event saw experts share their thoughts on the inspiration that stems from cultural heritage.

NATION'S TREASURED HISTORY ENRICHING MODERNIZATION

Legacies of Chinese civilization continue to resonate, pointing the way ahead for country's great rejuvenation

In evolving world, China must tell its stories well

By WANG RU
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The five prominent characteristics of the Chinese civilization have enriched the building of a modern civilization for the Chinese nation, according to Qu Yingpu, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily.

Speaking at a Vision China event in Jinzhou, Northeast China's Liaoning province on Sunday, Qu said the growing situation the world faces involves an evolution of changes with a magnitude unseen in a century, and so it's important to enhance international communication.

"We need to tell China's stories well, such as the story of the modern civilization of the Chinese nation, and showcase the glorious chapter of China's modernization through vivid practice and diversified cultural heritage on this land, including Liaoning," said Qu.

He cited the example of Liaoning and analyzed how its past reflects the five prominent features of the Chinese civilization: consistency, originality, uniformity, inclusiveness and peacefulness.

Liaoning boasts many sites of Hongshan culture, a key Neolithic culture that covered parts of today's Liaoning and Hebei provinces, as well as the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

In the early 1980s, archaeologists discovered the Niuheliang Site dating back 5,000 to 5,500 years in Chaoyang, Liaoning, marking a milestone in the study of Hongshan culture.

"Hongshan culture, hailed as 'one of the most important tap roots in the total root system of Chinese culture', is one of the cradles of Chinese civilization," said Qu. "With various archaeological discoveries of Hongshan culture such as dragon-shaped jade artifacts and the head sculpture of a goddess, as well as related sites, the verifiable history of Chinese civilization can be traced back much earlier than previously believed."

Moreover, Yiwulyu Mountain in Jinzhou is where a lot of historical stories spanning more than four millennia were written, from the



Qu Yingpu, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily.
FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

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time of the early legendary ruler Shun to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

As a result, in Liaoning, people can see the dawn of China's 5,000-plus years of civilization and trace its continuous development to this day, reflecting the consistency of the Chinese civilization, he said.

Since Hongshan culture is renowned for its exquisite jade artifacts, they embody the wisdom and creativity of our ancestors, as a reflection of the originality of the Chinese civilization, Qu said.

The industrial progress of modern Liaoning also demonstrates this feature, as the province became the "first industrial base of New China" with symbolic innovative achievements, according to Qu.

Liaoning is home to many "firsts" in New China, including being the place where the first high-powered internal combustion locomotive and first fighter jet were built, and where the first synthetic petroleum in China was

made. The first domestic aircraft carrier and first underwater glider also came from the province.

"Liaoning, the fast-changing traditional industrial area, is vigorously developing new quality productive forces and promoting overall revitalization with comprehensive innovation," said Qu.

The inclusive nature of Chinese civilization is evident in Liaoning's diverse population, which includes all 56 ethnic groups in China. The province has fostered interaction and integration among these groups, with ethnic minorities accounting for over 15 percent of the total population, he said.

He also mentioned the similarities in Liaoning's and southern China's cultural elements, and that the Liaoning people's fight against imperialist aggression in the 20th century was vivid testimony to the uniformity and peacefulness of the Chinese civilization.

"We have drawn strength and confidence from cultural inheritance and development. We are striding forward toward promoting cultural prosperity, building up China's cultural strength and constructing a modern civilization for the Chinese nation," said Qu.

These days, Liaoning is accelerating the construction of a new northeastern land and sea channel to Mongolia and Russia, and integrating itself deeply into the grand picture of the high-quality joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative.

"China is offering the international community a constant stream of new opportunities in the new era with its higher level of opening-up and high-quality development," said Qu.



Guest speakers receive souvenir portraits after sharing their insights on exploring and protecting Chinese culture at a Vision China event in Jinzhou, Liaoning province, on Sunday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Youths hail importance of protecting role of diverse cultural heritage

By XING WEN
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The youth dialogue segment of Vision China invited young representatives from various countries, who had just completed a two-day tour of historical attractions and scenic areas across Liaoning, to share their insights on exploring Chinese culture and protecting cultural heritage.

Reflecting on the tour, Aleksandra Antonenko, a Russian youth representative who holds a master's degree in Chinese politics from Shanghai Jiao Tong University, said that Liaoning made her feel at home.

"With its vast farmland and coastline, the food here is exceptionally fresh and delicious. I believe many tourists from Russia will love Liaoning," she said. The young woman began a social

media channel with her boyfriend, a native of Shanghai, last year.

"Through the channel, we can tell China's stories, share our personal perspectives and create a more understandable image for our fellows from other countries," she said.

Similarly, Bence Lengyel, a post-graduate student from Renmin University of China, has traveled to more than 30 cities across China. Since 2022, he has been sharing his travel logs and photos in a monthly online column for The China Cultural Center in Budapest, Hungary.

"Throughout my stay in China, one of my main goals should be to represent this beautiful country to my people back home as much as possible," he said.

When asked about the most important factors in telling China's story, he said, "The most important thing is to

communicate with people, especially those whose opinions differ from ours."

Throughout the two-day trip, Lengyel was impressed by the strong sense of pride the local people in Liaoning have for their cultural heritage and history.

"Our tour guide at the Wunyushan Mountain scenic area was a woman from the Manchu ethnic group. As we hiked, she not only talked about the history of the mountain but also shared her own life stories with us. I think it's very important for us to understand how important it is to protect our cultural heritage. It represents not just our country, but also who we really are," he said.

He emphasized the need for international students in China to understand not only their own cultural heritage but also that of other countries. He



Young guests share their thoughts on exploring Chinese culture and protecting cultural heritage. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

believes that in the future, they might have the chance to positively influence the cultural heritage of others, fostering greater understanding and collaboration through partnerships.

Hrshayeva Katsiaryna, a Belarusian doctoral student from the School of Chinese Language and Literature at Beijing Foreign Studies University, agreed. "I think that cultural heritage serves as a link between the past, present and future and connects people to their roots," she said.

While discussing the impact of artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies on heritage protection, she expressed a positive viewpoint.

She said that the emergence of AI technologies has opened up new opportunities for cultural preservation. For example, VR can create exact replicas of cultural artifacts, which educators, the public, researchers and conservationists can use. AI algorithms can identify damage and plan for restoration. Additionally, AI can aid in protecting cultural heritage sites through

What they say



Jinzhou is striving to become a cultural city and a top tourism destination. We are committed to preserving the treasures of Chinese culture and continuing the city's historical heritage. We warmly invite everyone to visit Jinzhou and experience the unique charm of the historic cultural hub, coastal leisure destination and culinary haven.
Liu Huiyan, secretary of the CPC Jinzhou Municipal Committee



Cultural heritage carries the precious wealth and collective memory of our nation. May everyone work together, pass on the torch and safeguard the light of civilization.
Chang Shana, designer and scholar of Dunhuang art



Culture, like music, has the power to transcend time and space, connecting people and places. With a long and rich history, the Chinese civilization has deep roots, and every one of us Chinese people takes immense pride and joy in our profound cultural heritage. Culture serves as the soul of a nation.
Lang Lang, pianist
WANG KAIHAO AND LI YINGXUE



Liu Huiyan, member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Liaoning Provincial Committee and head of the committee's publicity department. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Liaoning's foundation provides springboard for prosperous future

By LI YINGXUE
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Liaoning's cultural undertakings and industries are exhibiting unprecedented vigor and vitality, ushering in a dynamic phase of great development and prosperity, a senior official said at a Vision China event held on Sunday in Jinzhou, Liaoning province.

Liaoning's socioeconomic development presents a positive outlook that has not been seen in many years, said Liu Huiyan, member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Liaoning Provincial Committee and head of the committee's publicity department, adding that cultural revitalization is an integral aspect of Liaoning's comprehensive revitalization.

"Guided by the objective of 'building a high-quality model for the integrated development of culture, sports and tourism', we adhere to the principles of 'culture shaping tourism, tourism promoting culture, and the comprehensive and coordinated development of culture, sports and tourism'." Liu said.

Liaoning is celebrated for its long history and profound cultural heritage. For example, Niuheliang, a famous archaeological site in the province, is a key piece of ancient Chinese history. It pushes the benchmark of the origins of Chinese civilization back a further 500 to 600 years, highlighting Liaoning's importance in the story of human

development, according to Liu. He highlighted that Liaoning is home to many ethnicities, each contributing to its uniquely charming Sanyan culture, Liao-Jin culture, and pre-Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) culture. The region is renowned for its multiple World Heritage Sites.

"These sites, alongside the province's unique Red culture and leading industrial culture, create a vibrant and diverse tapestry of historical and cultural brilliance," Liu said.

"With its mountains and seas, Liaoning, this fertile cultural land, has countless cultural treasures waiting to be unearthed," he said.

There are traces of agriculture, fishing, hunting and nomadic mixed cultures. The land of Liaoning was always in a state of endless vitality and change.

Liaoning is not just the connection between Northeast China and Central China, but more importantly, it is the key that connects Northeast Asia with the inland Eurasian world and even the Western world. It is the land-sea key that links the Eurasian continent of Northeast Asia and the Pacific Plate.

Geography played a very important role in the development of human history. The location of Liaoning determined that Liaoning's story influenced China and the world on a larger scale.

Right now, coastal and border areas in Liaoning are further opening up and cooperating with Northeast Asian countries, and smart manufacturing based on a complete industrial chain is taking off.

The profound culture came from the unparalleled geographical environment, and the geographical environment also determined Liaoning's unique value in countless takeoff processes of China.

WANG KAIHAO, YANG YANG AND WANG QIAN

Speakers piece together stories of civilizations



Marcella Festa, associate professor at the School of Cultural Heritage of Northwest University
As an archaeologist, it is my privilege to uncover the secrets of ancient civilizations and piece together the stories that have shaped our world. These stories are shared histories, which foster a deeper appreciation for the diversities and commonalities that define humanity, and by doing so, enriches our understanding and educates and inspires future generations.

One of the most iconic examples of cultural integration is the Silk Road, an ancient network of routes that for centuries connected Asian and European civilizations.

In the contemporary world, the legacy of the Silk Road continues through initiatives like Chi-

na's Belt and Road Initiative, launched in 2013. This initiative not only seeks to foster economic integration but also enhances regional connectivity, facilitating cultural and educational exchanges on a global scale.

One of the ways in which archaeology helps to connect the world is through exhibitions. These exhibitions are not just about showcasing artifacts; they're about fostering cultural exchange and appreciation of cultural diversity.

In academic archaeology, the growing interest in an interconnected world is evident not only in the surge of articles published in academic journals on this topic, but also in the emergence of new journals in Europe and the United States dedicated to the Asian region, with a heavy focus on discoveries from China.

In archaeological research, we have witnessed an increase in collaborations among researchers from different countries, characterized by a growing number of scholarships, visiting student and scholar programs and joint research projects.

Archaeology has another crucial role — challenging and reshaping narratives. It has the power to debunk stereotypes or misconceptions about history and culture, fostering a sense of shared heritage. This shared heritage can promote mutual respect and understanding among different cultures in today's globalized world.



Zhu Yong, research librarian at the Palace Museum, director of the Palace Museum Cultural Communication Researcher Institute
Chinese civilization is essentially a diversified and integrated civilization. Dating back 6,000 years, from the present-day Liaoning province in the north to Liangzhu in today's Zhejiang province in the south, the sparkles of civilization shone across the vast land of China. Su Bingqi described it as a "sky full of stars". Among these "stars", the Hongshan culture in Liaoning shines particularly brightly.

Liaoning is located at the forefront of where the fishing and hunting culture that once boomed met the agrarian culture that had China's Central Plains as a hub, as well as grass-

land culture. Hongshan culture, by absorbing advanced elements from the Central Plains agrarian cultures, was the first to usher in the dawn of civilization.

Various systems of civilizations, in their process of development and spread, merged and converged. This continuous transformation has led to the optimization and growth of itself, making the Chinese nation a melting pot of many cultures and different ethnic groups. The characteristics of consistency, originality, uniformity, inclusiveness and peacefulness are exemplified in a very typical way in Liaoning. Liaoning's geography is not closed but open, whether traveling from north to south through Liaoning into the Central Plains, west into the Inner Mongolia autonomous region today, or east to the Korean Peninsula. This freedom of movement provided by the open landscape allowed for the formation of an economic and cultural community shared by various ethnic groups.

Liaoning's culture reflects the continuity of Chinese civilization, the innovative acceptance of new things, the unity that brings people together, the inclusiveness that embraces diversity, and the promotion of coexistence, harmony and peace. It shines as an outstanding example of the prominent features of Chinese civilization.



Steve Brown, senior research fellow at the University of Canberra's Centre for Creative and Cultural Research
Australia has a rich heritage that expresses the story of migration working and living in Australia.

For example, the Huawang Chinese Temple and Museum, located in the tropical region of Far North Queensland, is the latest timber and corrugated iron Chinese temple in Australia.

Established in 1903, most of the temple fittings, including the elaborate carvings, the bell and metal vessels, were made in China and transported to Australia. Australia's heritage consists of three cate-

gories. First, indigenous or First Nations heritage. Australian Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for more than 65,000 years and occupied all parts of the continent's landscapes.

These landscapes are rich in stories as much as they are in built structures, history and heritage. The best known heritage structure in Australia is the Sydney Opera House, shown here in its beautiful setting in Sydney Harbor.

It is important to note that no landscape in Australia is entirely natural. All landscapes are the product of natural systems, indigenous land use and migrant settler work and leisure.

While some places are listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and many important objects are in museums, much of our heritage is the everyday things that individuals and families love and value.

I express my warmest, the most sincere wishes for a happy and joyous Chinese Cultural and Natural Heritage Day. Please do celebrate the biggest and best heritage of your (Liaoning) province, but also the everyday family heritage and stories that are so important to our modern societies. By treasuring a past whether in Australia, China or elsewhere, we can enrich our future.



Erik Nilsson, senior journalist, core member of the Edgar Snow Newsroom, China Daily Exchanges and innovations bring diversity to the DNA of cultures that evolve, in every sense, like species that must adapt to changing environments or face extinction.

For example, in today's China, Spring Festival hongbao are still red envelopes containing cash — albeit they are increasingly digital packets containing digital currency sent by WeChat. Indeed, exchanges are as crucial to intangible culture's conservation as corporeal technologies are to the preservation of physical specimens.

One way we can think about cultural exchanges is like the ancient Silk Road transported to today and then, through digital technologies, from today

to the future — like a digital Belt and Road.

While few of the tangible cultural items, like silk and porcelain, that were traded among civilizations along the ancient Silk Road physically survive today, many of the intangible cultural products that moved along these trade routes psychically remain — be they religions or recipes, musical instruments or culinary ingredients, artistic styles or mathematical concepts.

No matter who you are or where you are on this planet, these cultural exchanges from long ago and far away have shaped your life since you were born and will continue to do so for your children, their children and those born after them.

For all of human history, so many peoples have spoken their own distinctive dialects in their respective regions.

But more importantly, all of humanity speaks to one another in a shared language of ones and zeroes, not only rewriting the cultural exchanges of today, globally, but also their legacies beyond tomorrow, for our world yet to come and for time immemorial.

While technology can enhance cultural exchanges and preservation... there will always remain value in meeting person-to-person, face-to-face and hand-in-hand to better see eye-to-eye. That is, the personal touch in every sense of the phrase, the value of which can never be fully replaced with any number of ones and zeroes.