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City set to host global history congress

Thousands of scholars from around the world expected to attend forthcoming event

By ZHAO RUIXUE

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The 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences due to open on August 23 in Shandong will be a good platform for historians from different continents to enhance cooperation and exchanges, said Marjatta Hietala, president of the International Committee of Historical Sciences.

"It is the first time that historians from so many countries, especially developing countries, are able to attend

the conference," said Hietala, who is also a professor of general history at the University of Tampere in Finland.

The congress is being held in an Asian country for the first time since it was initiated in 1900.

As the world's most influential academic event on historical sciences, it is held every five years and was only cancelled during the two world wars.

Sponsored by ICHS, which has 53 national committees, and co-organized by the Association of Chinese Historians

and Shandong University, this year's congress will be held in Jinan, the capital of Shandong province, from Aug 23 to 29.

The organizing committee at Shandong University — or SDU — said 2,649 scholars from 88 countries and regions had registered for the congress by August 21, of whom 911 are foreign scholars.

"For years, we have aimed to bring the conference from a solely European orientation towards a true global community of historians," said Hietala. "The Jinan congress will

show how successful recent efforts by historians have been to avoid research too centered on the Western point of view.

It will also show how successful their attempts to promote global history and transnational history have been," Robert Frank, secretary-general of ICHS, said in his letter to the press conference on the 100-day countdown to the Jinan congress held on May 15.

"The international conference is a success if it opens new aspects to history and if it strengthens the status of historians," said Hietala.

At the Jinan congress, historians will discuss new innovative themes, new methodological and thematic approaches and carry out comparative research, said Hietala.

Major themes

The Jinan congress has four major themes — China from Local Perspectives; Historicizing Emotions; Revolutions in World History: Comparisons and Connections; and Digital Turn of the History.

In addition, there will be 27

specialized themes, 18 joint sessions, 19 roundtables and conferences of 17 affiliated international organizations of ICHS, for a total of more than 150 meetings.

The sessions will cover topics such as environmental history, wealth and poverty, domestic work, tourism, football, city and space, technological progress and social development and the baby boom generation.

"Comparative and transnational aspects will be built into joint sessions," said Hietala.

A poster wall will be arranged to showcase young scholars' papers. On August 27, four experts will share their views with young scholars.

"Never before have so many junior researchers attended the conference," said Hietala.

On August 26, the congress will award the first Jaeger-LeCoultre History Prize that honors a historian or a group of historians who have distinguished themselves in the field of history through their works, publications or teaching, and have significantly contributed to the development of histori-

cal knowledge. This year's winner is French historian Serge Gruzinski.

"We build the prize in a manner comparable to the Nobel Prize or the Field Prize in Mathematics," said Hietala.

A closing ceremony will be held on August 29 at Shandong University when the host city for the 2020 congress will also be announced.

Commenting on the Jinan congress logo, which consists of the image of a Han Dynasty-style horse and carriage riding on an auspicious cloud, Hietala said, "For me the logo shows clearly the change and the turn in the history of sciences. Not only political history and history of wars but cultural history and the history of everyday life are important."

As the president, Hietala hopes the conference will discuss the role of historians and the fate of the history profession in the digitalized world.

"It seems the historical world view of the younger generation is built on popular presentations of history on media, films, TV, often written



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Marjatta Hietala, president of the International Committee of Historical Sciences

by non-professional historians. How can we keep abreast with new development? I'd like to receive an answer from different sessions," said Hietala.



Shandong University, the host of the event, is the second-oldest university in China.

YANG YUNLEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

International partners plan Sinology alliance

By WANG QIAN

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Shandong University is working with some of the world's leading universities and institutes to promote the study of Chinese history and culture.

"Based in Shandong province, one of the origins of the Chinese civilization, Shandong University has long been known for its strength in literature and history research and has many academic findings with international influence, which forms a basis for global cooperation," said Zhang Rong, president of the university.

"It is our duty to capture the essence of Chinese history and culture, and show it to the world," Zhang said.

The university is working on the establishment of a global Sinology alliance by cooperating with the world's top universities and institutions.

"The alliance's headquarters in our university is planned to be built in the second half of this year. One of its important works is to collect and study China's ancient and rare writings, and discover their modern value," said Zhang.

He said that the Harvard-Yenching Institute at Harvard University has confirmed its participation. Dozens of other world-class universities, including Oxford, the University of Tokyo, the University of Munich, the University of Vienna and Leiden University in the Netherlands, have also expressed their interest in joining in the alliance.

Shandong University has already carried out a massive project to collect rare Chinese classic texts that were stored in various libraries, museums and research institutions across the world.

The Chinese classic texts are mainly from books and writings before the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). They can be classified into four categories according to the content —

jing (Confucian classics), *shi* (historical works), *zi* (philosophical works and writings on agriculture, medicine, mathematics and astronomy) and *ji* (literature works).

"They are precious first-hand materials to study Chinese history and culture. However many of them are now owned by overseas libraries and private collectors due to various reasons," said Wang Chenglue, professor of the institute of literature history and philosophy at Shandong University, who is also a member of the project.

Such international cooperation benefits us a lot and helps us learn many advanced research methods and technology."

Fang Hui, head of the school of history and culture at Shandong University

"It will hinder the development of academic research and even the inheritance of Chinese traditional culture," Wang added.

Wang said the project is expected to collect and publish copies of 20,000 Chinese classic texts and establish a global database with digital scanning technology. Some rare Chinese classic texts will also be translated into different languages.

The project has support from the National Social Sciences Foundation, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, the British Library, the French National Library and other libraries and institutions in

Russia and Japan.

Shandong University is also promoting international cooperation in archaeological studies, one of its advantageous disciplines.

The university has established partnerships with more than 20 globally leading universities and archaeological institutes, including Yale University, the University of Toronto, the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and the University of California.

Since 1995, a Sino-US archaeological research team led by Shandong and Yale universities spent a decade carrying out a regional archaeological survey and excavation in Rizhao, a coastal city in Shandong.

They found a Neolithic site — the Liangchengzhen site, which is believed to date back to 2,600 BC, and ruins of a prehistoric state dating back to between 3,000 and 2,200 BC.

The findings caused a stir in international archaeological circles as they show that there might have been dozens of prehistoric states in eastern China from 5,000 years ago, thousands of years before China's first textually attested state — the Xia Dynasty (c.21st century-16th century BC).

"Such international cooperation benefits us a lot and helps us learn many advanced research methods and technology," said Fang Hui, head of the school of history and culture at Shandong University, who is also a member of the team.

"For example, inspired by the Sino-US project, we established an archaeological laboratory, the first one of its kind in Chinese universities, and promoted the interdisciplinary approach in archaeology," said Fang.

The university has a museum, which houses more than 150,000 cultural relics, including 20 precious pieces on the national list of important findings. Two of its archeological findings were among the top 10 Chinese archeological discoveries in 1995 and 2010.



Foreign students pass statues of eight renowned history professors at Shandong University, which has strengths in historical studies.

YANG YUNLEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

University has hopes to impress historians, promote globalization

By ZHUAN TI

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More than 2,000 historians from around the globe will meet at Shandong University on Aug 23 for the 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences.

"The ICHS is a great festival for domestic and global historians to interact with each other," said Zhang Rong, president of Shandong University.

"It is a great opportunity for further globalization of the university," Zhang said.

"We have been making preparations five years in advance," he added, "over 200 professors and experts in our university are scheduled to attend the congress while over 500 students will offer services."

The history of Shandong University dates back to 1901, when the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) government founded Shandong Academy, the second university in the nation.

After more than a century's development, the university is now among the top 39 universities of China, with both national and global influences. It has branches in Weihai and Qingdao, as well as research institutions in major coastal cities outside Shandong province.

Currently, the university has more than 60,000 students, including 16,000 postgradu-

ates. Its 400,000 graduates are making contributions to the nation's development in their own posts.

The university's alumni range from State leaders to distinguished scholars, as well as entrepreneurs and ambassadors, while its faculty include Nobel Prize laureates, top academicians and young, vigorous scholars enlisted by various programs in the nation.

To improve its education quality, Shandong University has also been recruiting overseas. Every year it invites more than 400 foreign experts.

Peter Grünberg, the 2007 winner of Nobel Prize for Physics, is among the international experts working fulltime at the university.

"Shandong University is open to students from all around the globe," Zhang said. "We are among the first domestic universities to accept international students and teach Mandarin to them — over 3,000 foreign students attend our courses every year."

Education for international students includes 108 courses in 14 subjects taught in English. Those with distinguished academic potential can receive various scholarships, while those needing financial assistance can also apply for funding, according to Zhang.

"Located in Shandong, the birthplace of Confucius, the



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Zhang Rong, president of Shandong University

university has incomparable advantages in traditional Chinese culture research," Zhang said. "We also take it as our historical responsibility to inherit the traditions and pass them to our coming generations."

He said the university is creating platforms for the study of Chinese culture, including

the Global Association for Chinese Tradition Studies, Confucianism Coordination and Innovation Center, as well as the Nishan Forum on World Civilization, a forum held in Confucius's hometown of Nishan to examine global values.

In the field of science and technology, the university is making progress and participating in programs such as the ATLAS Large Hadron Collider and Alpha Magnet Spectrograph.

Zhang said globalization has always been Shandong University's strategy. Currently, the university has formed cooperative ties with more than 220 colleges and universities globally, which cover student exchanges, research cooperation and exchange of faculty.

The university has also opened eight Confucius Institutes in seven Western nations to help promote Chinese language and culture teaching. It also has the only experience center for Chinese culture for overseas students, attracting a large number of international students every year.

"History has granted Shandong University new opportunities," Zhang said. "By the 22nd session of ICHS, we will not only impress global historians, but also promote the globalization of our university."