

FOUR TREASURES SUPPORT TWO MILLENNIA OF STUDY

People who are familiar with Chinese calligraphic art should know the "Four Treasures of the Study". It is an expression used to denote the brush, ink stick, paper and ink stone.

The best of the "Four Treasures" products have been and are still produced in Anhui province.

Xuan Paper, known as *Xuanzhi*, was named after the origin of its production — Xuanchecheng, a city in southeastern Anhui province.

This particular form of paper upholds the marks made by Chinese brushes and ink.

Though soft and fine-textured, it has a high tensile strength and resistance to distortion and color changes, gaining it the reputation of "the paper of a thousand-year history".

The special processing methods of the paper determine its exceptional quality. The paper can be made unprocessed, half-processed or processed.

The various processes are used for controlling the amount of ink absorbed into the paper fiber, as well as the stiffness of the paper itself.

Unprocessed papers are very absorbent and quite malleable, whereas processed papers are far more resistant to absorption and stiffer.

The processing methods for Xuan Paper were listed in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage items in 2006.

Paper and writing brushes indistinguishable in calligraphic art. Xuanchecheng's brushes have also won fame over the past 2,000 years.

The brush is nothing like the pen we use today. It is soft because it is made of hair from animals such as rabbit, goat and wolf.

With elegant decoration, clean animal hair and neither too-soft nor too-hard brush points, the brushes of the best quality made in Xuanchecheng were exclusively supplied to emperors in the past.

The ink stick produced in Huizhou — today's Huangshan city — also has a thousand years of history. The ink stick is mainly made out of pine soot and 20 other materials, and is then glued together and pressed into the shape of a chocolate bar and allowed to dry.

The ink stick has a rich and thick color, subtle gloss and fragrant scent because of the precious ingredients. It also possesses antistatic and antibacterial properties.

The last treasure, the ink stone, is used to grind the ink stick into a powder to be mixed with water.

The She ink stones from Shexian in southern Anhui used to be regarded as one of the most famous ink stones in China.

The ink stones made there can keep the ink wet for a long time, while the smooth surface of the ink stone can protect the fragile point of brush.

Though the production of ink stones is in natural texture, with a variety of texture patterns available, making each ink stone unique.

As one of the important cradles of Chinese culture, Anhui doesn't just have ink and paper.

Wuhu, another city in Anhui, produces a special kind of "painting" by using iron as ink, and a hammer as the pen.

Drawing on the experiences of Chinese silk, paper-cutting, embroidery, lacquer and mosaics, the painters depict landscapes, people, flowers, insects, fish, birds, animals and other figures on iron and wood materials.

The black iron material and the white background create a strong contrast, endowing the iron painting with the artistic characteristics of Chinese classical paintings made with ink and paper.

Huizhou carvings are the local art in Huizhou include brick, stone, wood and bamboo



The painted pottery of Jieshou features decoration with tricolor carvings.



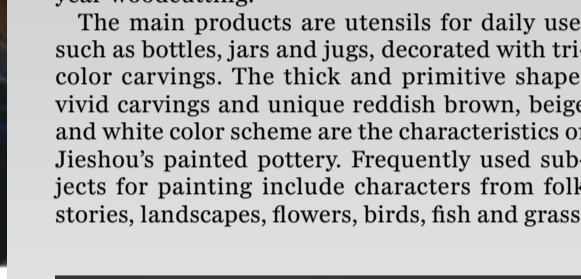
The Ding cauldron discovered in Anhui is evidence of the province's high level of bronze ware manufacturing technique during the Warring States period.

carvings. The carvings are used for residential buildings, ancestral temples, memorial halls and other types of building decorations as well as furniture, screens, pens and other craft production.

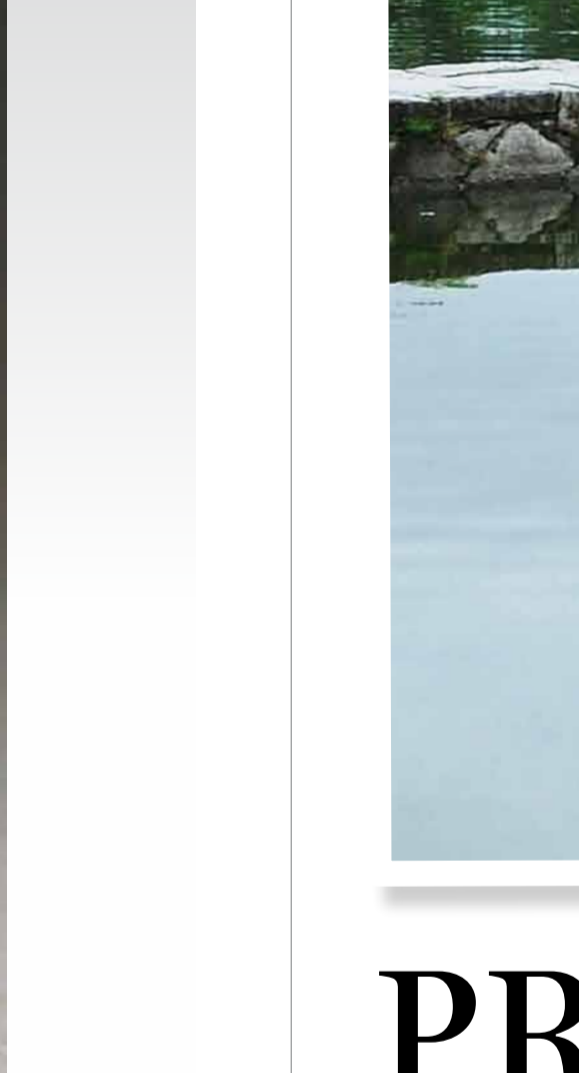
Jieshou, a city in northern Anhui, is renowned for its painted pottery.

Originating in the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, the painted pottery in Jieshou prevailed during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. It inherited the style of Tang tri-colored pottery and adopted the exquisite techniques and styles from other artistic forms, such as Chinese paper cutting and new woodcutting.

The main products are utensils for daily use, such as bottles, jars and jugs, decorated with tri-color carvings. The thick and primitive shape, vivid carvings and unique reddish brown, beige and white color scheme are the characteristics of Jieshou's painted pottery. Frequently used subjects for painting include characters from folk stories, landscapes, flowers, birds, fish and grass.



The compass made in Wan'an, Xuining county, can be used for both Fengshui and navigation.



The discovery of this jade figure in Lingjiantan shows the locals' craftsmanship of more than 5,000 years ago.

PROVINCE PROMISES RICH BLEND OF NATURAL DELIGHTS



The Tiantangshan Scenic Area is a national-level nature reserve and geological park.

Working Guests Pine, which is thought to be more than 1,000 years old. Its name comes from the trees' resemblance to a warm host stretching out their arms to welcome visitors. Its image appears as a decoration in restaurants and homes all over China and a huge iron art relief of more than 1,000 meters above sea level. Its highest point has an elevation of 1,760 meters.

One of the famous sites of Tiantangshan is the Mystery Valley. It is a valley formed by rocks falling from the mountain. The valley has 53 caves, forming a very complicated maze.

As Confucius wrote in his *Analects*: "The wise enjoy water, the humane seek mountains." It is necessary to visit other mountains, and a visit to Huangshan makes it unnecessary to visit the five-holy mountains.

The Huangshan Mountain scenic area in southern Anhui province covers an area of 600 square kilometers. Its three major peaks, the highest Lotus Flower Peak, the precipitous Celestial Capital Peak and the flat Bright Summit Peak, are all at altitudes of more than 1,600 meters.

The tourist destination is known for peculiarly-shaped rocks, pine trees, hot springs, winter snow and views of the billowing clouds above.

Huangshan pine trees (Pines *hwangshanensis*) typically grow at moderate to high altitudes on steep, rocky crags and are a major part of eastern China's striking landscapes. Many of the trees have their own names, such as the renowned

been successively established there since ancient times, and there are more than 2,000 extant cultural relics and some 500 related poems and essays written by some of China's renowned writers and scholars from past dynasties.

The Tiantangshan Mountain in Qianshan county, also called Mount Wan, is the place from which the scenic area, which covers an area of 35 square kilometers. It is also home to a wealth of flora and fauna. The area boasts rich cultural attractions such as Lingze Temple, which was originally built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and Zuiweng Pavilion, constructed in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The Song Dynasty poets Ouyang Xu and Xin Qi, both served as officials in Chuzhou and wrote celebrated poems and essays praising the mountain.

Tiantangshan Scenic Area

The area is a national-level nature reserve and geological park. It is said to be the last primitive forest in East China, with a diversity of plant life. It covers 620 sq km and has 25 peaks at an altitude of more than 1,000 meters. The highest peak in the area is a main peak of the Dabie Mountains, which form the main watershed of the Yangtze and Huaihe rivers. Tiantangshan is an ideal place for travelers who are looking to get closer to nature.

Taijiao Lake

The lake lies at the northern foot of Huangshan

low river. Are outstanding examples of China's breathtaking natural wonders and culture.

The mountain has also attracted some of China's most notable figures, including Lu Bai, a poet of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Xu Xiake, a geographer and explorer of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), was well known for his 59-term "Three Treasures".

The view from the mountaintops is known as the Sea of Clouds, because of the clouds' resemblance to an ocean. The views, pine trees, granite peaks and rocks resemble magnificent, natural paintings.

Huangshan Mountain, together with the Yangtze River, Great Wall and Yellow River, are outstanding examples of China's breathtaking natural wonders and culture.

The mountain has also attracted some of China's most notable figures, including Lu Bai, a poet of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Xu Xiake, a geographer and explorer of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), was well known for his 59-term "Three Treasures".

The view from the mountaintops is known as the Sea of Clouds, because of the clouds' resemblance to an ocean. The views, pine trees, granite peaks and rocks resemble magnificent, natural paintings.

Huangshan Mountain, together with the Yangtze River, Great Wall and Yellow River, are outstanding examples of China's breathtaking natural wonders and culture.

Mountain. It is the largest artificial lake in Anhui, covering an area of 88 sq km. It is surrounded by mountains and more than 10 islands dot the center of the lake. Forest coverage in the Taijiao Lake Scenic Area surpasses 95 percent and the area is home to more than 580 wild plants.

Shexian county

The region has been home to many renowned historical figures including art historian and painter Huang Binhong and educator Tao Xingbi. It is noted for the Xin'an School of Painting, Xin'an School of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Hui School of Sculpture and the Huizhou branches of Chinese cuisine. Shexian county has numerous historical sites and relics, such as memorial archways, ancestral halls and ancient villages featuring houses built several centuries ago.

Sanhe ancient town

The town in Heife traces its history back to more than 2,500 years and its present name derives from the fact that three rivers — Fengjie, Hanguo and Xiaonan — meet there. It boasts a number of well-preserved old buildings, abounds with folk culture and is home to Luji, a local opera in Heife, capital of Anhui, also a national intangible cultural heritage item.

Other attractions

Langa Mountain

The mountain is in the southwest region of Chuzhou city. Winding paths lead to secluded places in the scenic area, which covers an area of 35 square kilometers. It is also home to a wealth of flora and fauna. The area boasts rich cultural attractions such as Lingze Temple, which was originally built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and Zuiweng Pavilion, constructed in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The Song Dynasty poets Ouyang Xu and Xin Qi, both served as officials in Chuzhou and wrote celebrated poems and essays praising the mountain.

Tiantangshan Scenic Area

The area is a national-level nature reserve and geological park. It is said to be the last primitive forest in East China, with a diversity of plant life. It covers 620 sq km and has 25 peaks at an altitude of more than 1,000 meters. The highest peak in the area is a main peak of the Dabie Mountains, which form the main watershed of the Yangtze and Huaihe rivers. Tiantangshan is an ideal place for travelers who are looking to get closer to nature.

Taijiao Lake

The lake lies at the northern foot of Huangshan

Shexian county

The region has been home to many renowned historical figures including art historian and painter Huang Binhong and educator Tao Xingbi. It is noted for the Xin'an School of Painting, Xin'an School of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Hui School of Sculpture and the Huizhou branches of Chinese cuisine. Shexian county has numerous historical sites and relics, such as memorial archways, ancestral halls and ancient villages featuring houses built several centuries ago.

Sanhe ancient town

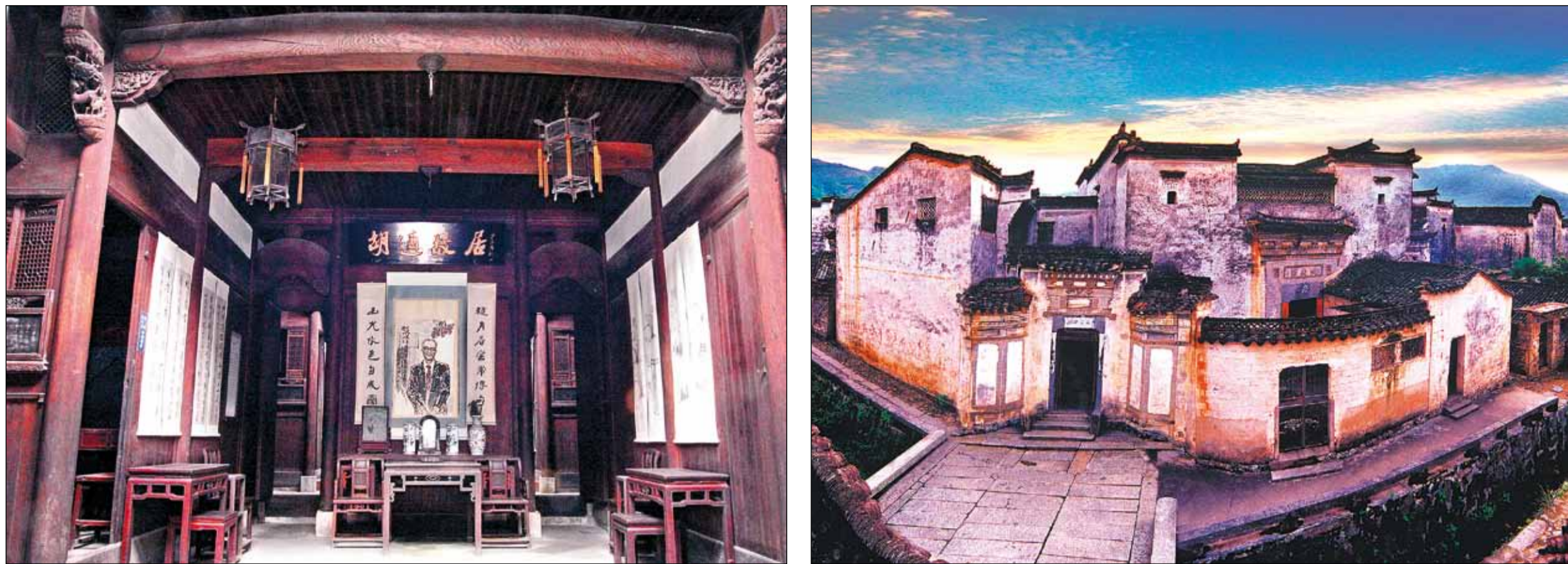
The town in Heife traces its history back to more than 2,500 years and its present name derives from the fact that three rivers — Fengjie, Hanguo and Xiaonan — meet there. It boasts a number of well-preserved old buildings, abounds with folk culture and is home to Luji, a local opera in Heife, capital of Anhui, also a national intangible cultural heritage item.



A dragon boat race takes place in Sanhe ancient town in Feixi county.



The Zuiweng Pavilion, or Drunken Old Man's Pavilion, in Chuzhou has become famous because of a verse by Song Dynasty poet Ouyang Xu.



The interior (left) and exterior of the residence of Hu Shi, the renowned modern Chinese cultural figure born in Jixi county, Anhui province.

Legacy of great thinkers still shapes modern culture

By ZHAOSHILUN
lily@chinafamily.com.cn

The history of Anhui province as it is defined today is beyond 400 years old. However, its contributions to Chinese civilization extend far beyond that period.

Anhui became a province in 1667 during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Its name is a combination of the first characters of the names of Huizhou (today's Huangshan city) prefectures.

Anhui is also commonly known as "Wan", as it was home to the ancient Wan Kingdom more than 3,000 years ago.

A great number of relics of human activities in the region dating back to the Paleolithic and Neolithic ages have been found in Anhui, showing its important role in the development of ancient Chinese civilization.

Anhui's culture reached its first peak during the Spring and Autumn (770-476 BC) and Warring States (475-221 BC) periods when two Anhui natives created Taoism, a prominent school of philosophy with a lasting impact on the nation's culture.

Laozi, or Lao-Tzu, born in Anhui's Wuyang county, was a famous Chinese philosopher living the Spring and Autumn period.

He is known as the author of the *Tao Te Ching* — or *Daojing* — and the founder of philosophical Daoism, a faith worshipped as a deity in religious Daoism and other traditional Chinese religions.

According to Laozi's philosophy, the universe is dominated by Tao, the powerful and yet supremely humble natural force. He deemed that people should live in harmony with nature, free from unnatural desires, and that administrators should govern according to the principle of "wu wei", which means not doing anything against the natural rules.

Laozi's philosophy had a great influence on politics in the following generations, though he himself detested the politics at all.

A number of emperors, especially the founders of later dynasties, believed in governing by wu wei, practicing limited government with less interference in social life, leaving light taxation and allowing more freedom for people and businesses to develop.

Laozi's legacy was inherited by Zhuangzi, or Zhuang Zhou, another proponent of philosophical Daoism who lived in Anhui's Mengcheng county in the fourth century BC (360-270). The Song Dynasty poets Ouyang Xu and Xin Qi, both served as officials in Chuzhou and wrote celebrated poems and essays praising the mountain.

The Taoist ideas of Tao and Yin Yang, which explained the change of the four seasons and invented the 24 Solar Terms to guide farming.

Liu An, the inventor of bean curd — a byproduct of his alchemy practice — and the editor-in-chief of the book *Huainanzi*, an encyclopedia based on Taoist thought, covering science, technology, literature, philosophy and medicine.

Anhui's literature came to a peak during the late Han Dynasty. Cao Cao (155-220), who was born in Bozhou, Anhui, was the greatest statesman of the age. He and his two sons — Cao Pi and Cao Zhi — were also the greatest poets of the time. The

China has thousands of types of local opera, but only a few of them have become famous nationwide.

The Huangmei Opera, a local form of opera in East China's Anhui province, is one of the mainstream opera genres in China, along with the Peking Opera in Beijing, Yue Opera in Zhejiang, Ping Opera in Hubei and Yu Opera in Henan.

The original Huangmei Opera was sung by women while picking tea, and was called the Picking Tea Song.

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the genre became a local opera popular in Anhui's Anqing city and its adjacent regions, combining local folk art and the Xiangxi dances in singing and chants.

Huangmei Opera was active in border regions among Anhui, Hubei and Jiangxi provinces in the 18th century.

In the first half of the 20th century, Huangmei performances gradually became professional, rising from rural areas to city stages. Artists developed the opera and borrowed performance styles from other operas. They reformed the traditional chants, making the drama easy to understand with a lively rhythm.

The year 1932 was crucial for Huangmei Opera, when excellent artists Yan Fengqing, Wang Shaofang and others gave performances in Shanghai for a big opera festival. Audiences from various areas were shocked and appreciated Huangmei Opera, attracted by its new singing forms and stories.

Huangmei Opera became very famous nationwide after that. The big success evoked the passion of Huangmei Opera artists and they created such classics as *The Heavenly Match*, *The Herd Boy* and *The Weaving Girl* and *The Female Prince Consort*.

A school of Confucian thought prevailed in Anhui during the Song Dynasty because of the Song thinkers Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. Their thoughts, focusing on rationalist interpretation of the classics by Confucius and Mencius, became the mainstream of Chinese culture for nearly 1,000 years.

The historical legacies finally led to the formation of Huizhou Culture — a culture flourishing in southern Anhui covering a wide range of fields such as philosophy, literature, medicine, architecture, fine art, handicrafts and folk customs.

Using the Taoist ideas of Tao and Yin Yang, which explained the change of the four seasons and invented the 24 Solar Terms to guide farming.

Liu An, the inventor of bean curd — a byproduct of his alchemy practice — and the editor-in-chief of the book *Huainanzi*, an encyclopedia based on Taoist thought, covering science, technology, literature, philosophy and medicine.

Anhui's literature came to a peak during the late Han Dynasty. Cao Cao (155-220), who was born in Bozhou, Anhui, was the greatest statesman of the age. He and his two sons — Cao Pi and Cao Zhi — were also the greatest poets of the time. The



From left: Wang Maoyin, a Qing Dynasty financial expert; Bao Zheng, a Song Dynasty judicial officer; Qi Jiguang, Ming Dynasty general; and Bi Sheng, the inventor of movable type in Song Dynasty, were all renowned historical figures born in Anhui.

Local opera serves as foundation of beloved national art form

By ZHAOSHILUN

China has thousands of types of local opera, but only a few of them have become famous nationwide.

The Huangmei Opera, a local form of opera in East China's Anhui province, is one of the mainstream opera genres in China, along with the Peking Opera in Beijing, Yue Opera in Zhejiang, Ping Opera in Hubei and Yu Opera in Henan.

The original Huangmei Opera was sung by women while picking tea, and was called the Picking Tea Song.

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the genre became a local opera popular in Anhui's Anqing city and its adjacent regions, combining local folk art and the Xiangxi dances in singing and chants.

Huangmei Opera was active in border regions among Anhui, Hubei and Jiangxi provinces in the 18th century.

In the first half of the 20th century, Huangmei performances gradually became professional, rising from rural areas to city stages. Artists developed the opera and borrowed performance styles from other operas. They reformed the traditional chants, making the drama easy to understand with a lively rhythm.

The year 1932 was crucial for Huangmei Opera, when excellent artists Yan Fengqing, Wang Shaofang and others gave performances in Shanghai for a big opera festival. Audiences from various areas were shocked and appreciated Huangmei Opera, attracted by its new singing forms and stories.

Huangmei Opera became very famous nationwide after that. The big success evoked the passion of Huangmei Opera artists and they created such classics as *The Heavenly Match*, *The Herd Boy* and *The Weaving Girl* and *The Female Prince Consort*.

A school of Confucian thought prevailed in Anhui during the Song Dynasty because of the Song thinkers Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. Their thoughts, focusing on rationalist interpretation of the classics by Confucius and Mencius, became the mainstream of Chinese culture for nearly 1,000 years.

The historical legacies finally led to the formation of Huizhou Culture — a culture flourishing in southern Anhui covering a wide range of fields such as philosophy, literature, medicine, architecture, fine art, handicrafts and folk customs.

Using the Taoist ideas of Tao and Yin Yang, which explained the change of the four seasons and invented the 24 Solar Terms to guide farming.

Liu An, the inventor of bean curd — a byproduct of his alchemy practice — and the editor-in-chief of the book *Huainanzi*, an encyclopedia based on Taoist thought, covering science, technology, literature, philosophy and medicine.

Anhui's literature came to a peak during the late Han Dynasty. Cao Cao (155-220), who was born in Bozhou, Anhui, was the greatest statesman of the age. He and his two sons — Cao Pi and Cao Zhi — were also the greatest poets of the time. The



The Couple Watching Lanterns is one of the classical Huangmei Opera programs.



Han Zafen, a renowned contemporary Huangmei Opera artist, performs on the stage.



The locals' enthusiasm is the main reason for the development of Huangmei Opera.



An Anhui opera depicts Romance of Three Kingdoms.