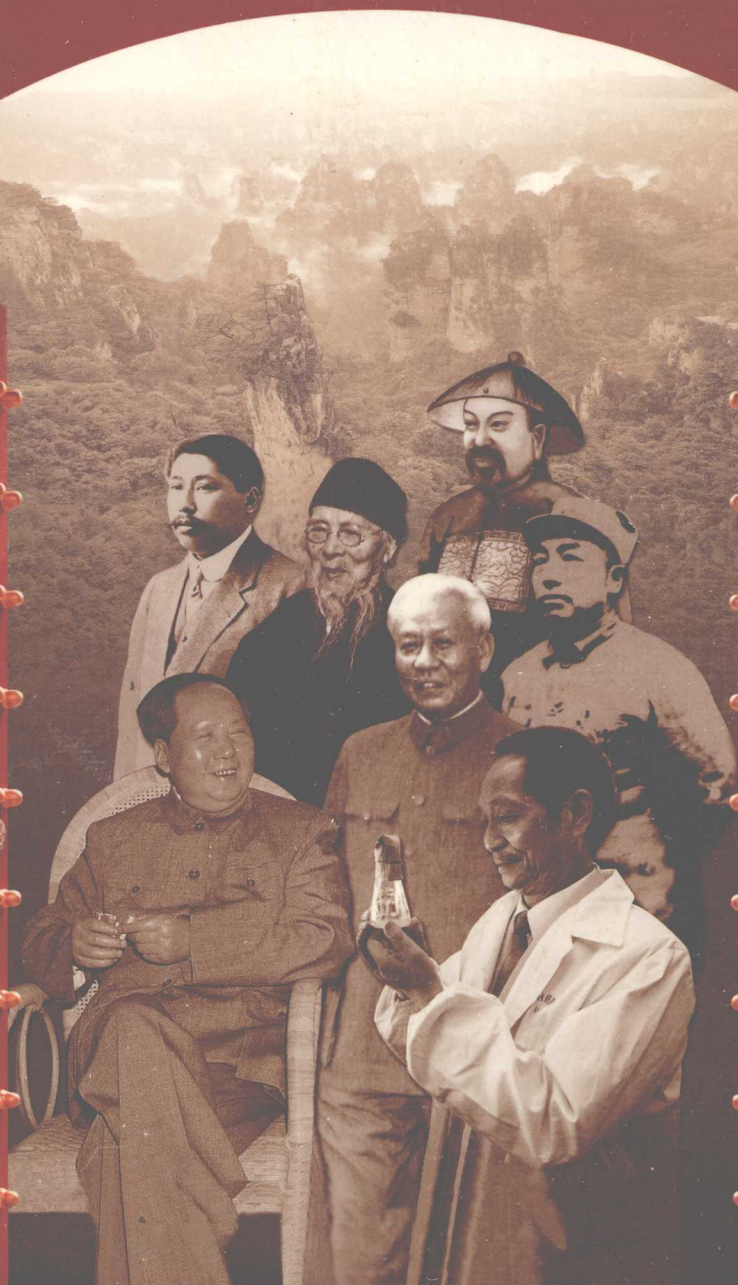


PANORAMIC CHINA

HUNAN

HOME OF CHINESE CELEBRITIES



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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PANORAMIC CHINA

Hunan

Home of Chinese Celebrities



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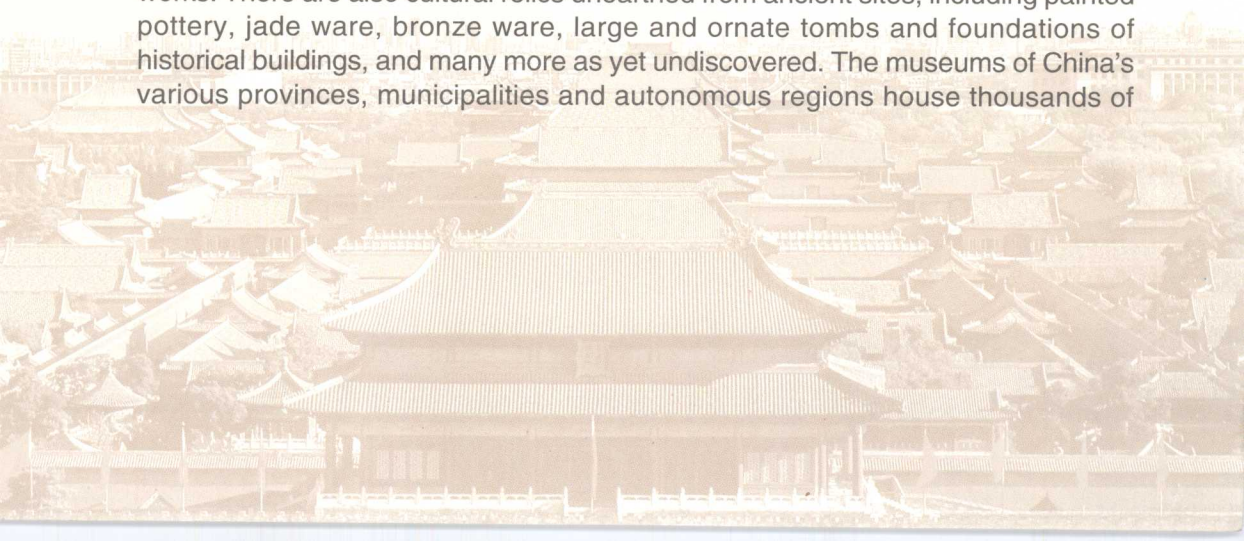
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Introduction

China has 23 provinces, four municipalities directly under the Central Government, five autonomous regions and two special administrative regions. Due to geographical and topographical differences and climatic variations, each area has its own unique natural scenery. The mountains in the north of the country are rugged and magnificent, the waters in the south are clear and turbulent, the Gobi in the northwest shines brilliantly in the sunlight, the hills in the southeast are often shrouded in floating fog, green waves of sorghum and soybean crops undulate over the vast fields of the northeast, and the mountains in the southwest, with sequestered villages and terraced fields, look tranquil and picturesque.

There are 56 ethnic groups in China. The Han, making up the overwhelming majority of the population, mainly live in the eastern and central parts of the country, while many ethnic groups with smaller populations live in the west. In China, all ethnic groups, regardless of size, are equal and respect each other. Each ethnic group has its own folk customs, religious beliefs and cultural traditions, and most use their own language and script. Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where ethnic minorities live in compact communities. All the ethnic groups call themselves “Chinese.” They are courteous and friendly. In the ethnic-minority areas, the quiet environment, quaint buildings, exquisite fashions, unsophisticated folk customs and hospitality of the local people hold a great appeal to visitors from afar.

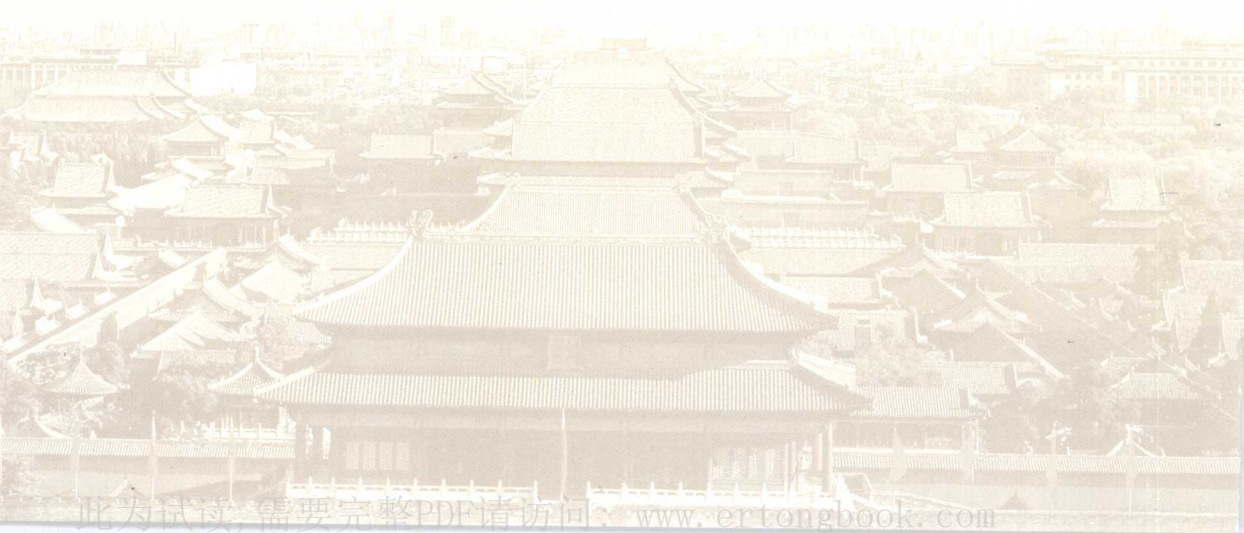
China boasts 5,000 years of recorded civilization and a brilliant culture. The country is home to such world-renowned cultural treasures as the Great Wall, terracotta warriors and horses of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, and Ming and Qing imperial palaces and mausoleums, and large numbers of ancient architectural masterpieces, including temples, Buddhist pagodas, residential buildings, gardens, bridges, city walls and irrigation works. There are also cultural relics unearthed from ancient sites, including painted pottery, jade ware, bronze ware, large and ornate tombs and foundations of historical buildings, and many more as yet undiscovered. The museums of China’s various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions house thousands of



cultural relics and works of art, among which are treasures rare in the world, displaying the long history of China and the splendid Chinese culture from different aspects. The strong, deep-rooted Chinese culture has always influenced the mentality and moral standards of the Chinese people, having developed continually in pace with the civilization. A careful study of today's Peking Opera, kunqu opera, shadow plays, calligraphy, painting, paper-cutting, and even the flower-shaped steamed buns on the kitchen range of farmers will reveal elements of traditional Chinese culture as well as replications of the art of the past.

Like other countries of venerable age, China has suffered grievous calamities. During the century and more before the 1950s, the Chinese people made unrelenting struggles for the prosperity of the country, and national independence and liberation. A large number of insightful people and revolutionaries, cherishing all kinds of dreams for a strong China, studied the ways of the West in a quest for prosperity and strength, and borrowed the revolutionary experience of foreign countries. At last, the Communist Party of China, proceeding from the reality of China, and relying on the working people, founded a brand-new country, the People's Republic of China, in 1949. Since then, the Chinese people have made persistent efforts and explorations for the grand revitalization of the Chinese nation. The Chinese people's efforts in the past two decades and more have resulted in outstanding achievements, with rapid social progress, a well-developed economy, and a modern civilization and traditional culture enhancing each other.

It is easy to have a quick look at China's past and present, but it takes time to gain a panoramic knowledge of China. The "Panoramic China" series is meant to assist readers, especially those overseas, in this respect. Each volume in the series focuses on a province, municipality or autonomous region, describing, with illustrations, the outstanding characteristics of each area from different perspectives. Through this series, the reader will acquire knowledge of the real and vivid daily life of the local people, the colorful society and the developing economy, assisted by relevant information.



Location of Hunan Province within China



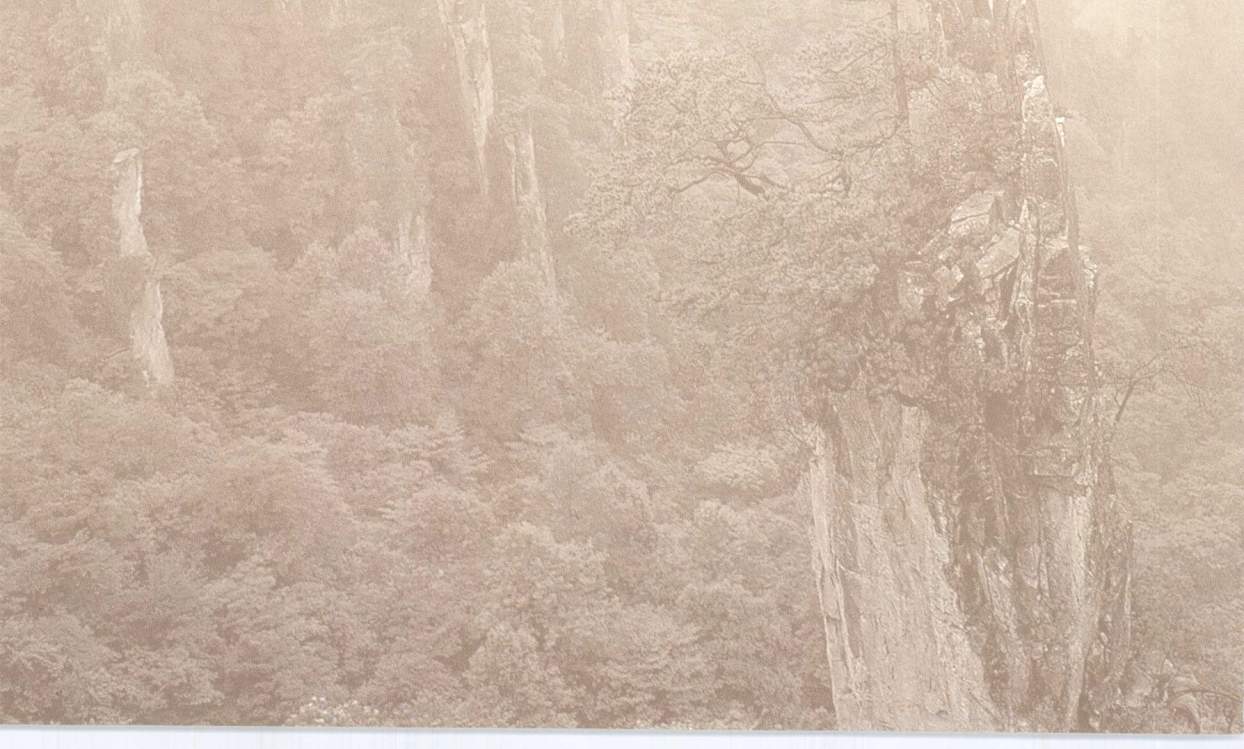
Sketch map of Hunan



Foreword

Hunan Province was the birthplace of Mao Zedong, one of China's three best known 20th century figures in the world alongside Sun Yat-sen and Deng Xiaoping. He once wrote these lines of poetry about his native province: "Happy, I see wave upon wave of paddy and beans, and all around heroes, home-bound in the evening mist." Hunan is indeed a land of rich natural resources and home of many heroes.

The name Hunan means south of the lake in Chinese, the lake being Dongting Lake. Because the province is traversed by the Xiangjiang River it is also called Xiang. In prehistoric times, following the Yellow Emperor's defeat of the Chiyou tribe, Chiyou and his tribal people fled into Hunan and formed a tribe named the Sanmiao around today's provincial capital of Changsha. During the Warring States Period (8th-3rd century BC), Hunan became the territory of the State of Chu. As people from Chu migrated into the region in great numbers, some indigenous people were pushed out into the mountains, while others assimilated with the immigrants, and evolved into today's Han people in the province.



Hunan started to become prosperous during the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern dynasties (3rd century BC-AD 6th century), be one of China's major rice producers. By the end of the Yuan Dynasty (mid-14th century), due to years of warfare the local population had dropped drastically and land lay abandoned. Zhu Yuanzhang, the founding emperor of the following Ming Dynasty, gave orders that people from neighboring areas should move into Hunan, allowing them to take ownership of lands by staking out the ground. Hunan thus became a risk-takers' paradise. The region soon resumed its role as a key grain supplier to the nation, giving rise to the saying "Once the crops in Huguang (the region including Hunan and other southern provinces) are harvested, the whole country can be fed."

Fly from Beijing to Changsha in autumn or winter, and you will be surprised by the masses of green in the provincial capital after the brown withered plains of northern China. Hunan is green all year round, with pools like giant mirrors, rippling seas of paddy, and scattered farmhouses inlaid like islets in an ocean. Of all China's provinces (autonomous regions, centrally-administered municipalities and special admin-

istrative regions), Hunan was the third to launch the drive of reforestation of barren mountains and it now boasts forest coverage of 54 percent. Hunan's world natural cultural heritage site of Zhangjiajie is China's first national forest park and world geological park. The park's "800 grotesque peaks and 3,000 beautiful rivers" are all nourished by the area's dense forests.

Hunan is also golden — its waves of ripening paddy an autumn spectacle. It is white, too — at cotton harvest time snow-white cotton bushes fill the hillsides as far as the horizon.

Hunan is surrounded by the Luoxiao Mountains to the east, the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau to the west and the Wuling Mountains to the south. Its terrain therefore slopes from east to west and south to north. Its four major rivers — the Xiangjiang, Zijiang, Yuanjiang and Lishui — empty into the Dongting Lake. Its annual rainfall is not really of a significant volume, but is concentrated into a short period. When there is little rain, the province suffers drought; when the rains come, they may easily turn into floods. Of Hunan's terrain, 70 percent is hilly, 20 percent is of water and only 10 percent agricultural; arable land is scarce. Its soils are predominantly red and acidic,



and apart from a fertile swathe in the Dongting Lake Plain, most of the upland soils are impoverished. Throughout history the nature of Hunan's geography and climate have made life here difficult. Late July to early August, when temperatures are at their peak, is also the busiest period for local farmers. They have to stand all day in the scalding water of their paddy fields, rush-reaping rice and rush-transplanting their seedlings for the second crop. This would be unthinkable for farmers in northern China. Every year, floods hit Hunan. Water is the province's biggest resource, but a mixed blessing for its inhabitants.

The ethos of a people is inherently associated with the place they inhabit. The Hunanese spirit is rooted in their beautiful, but sometimes malign, mountains and waters and in their turbulent history. In ancient times Hunan was on the periphery of the Central Plain's Han culture. The city of Yongzhou was where the ancient emperor Yao died during his inspection tour to the south. In those days, belligerent tribes such as Miao, Yao and Tujia were scattered throughout what is now Hunan province, and contributed to the creation of its local culture.

Due to their unique geography and racial origins, the Hunanese exhibit particular



traits, many anthropologists and historians comparing them with Prussians, a people known for their courage and stubbornness.

The toughness and martial spirit of the Hunan people can be attributed to the collision and blending of cultures in history. The province was a strategic spot between central and western China, and underwent the southward expansion of the Han culture and a number of wars and invasions, including the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in the 1930s and 1940s. It has deterred all those who have tried to encroach upon or to conquer its territory, and won the reputation of never admitting defeat or yielding to the threat of death.

The turbulent times between the end of the Qing Dynasty and the start of the Republic of China (late 19th-early 20th centuries) gave the Hunanese the chance to show what they are made of. It was widely acknowledged that “out of ten generals, nine are from Hunan” and that “an army is not an army without Hunanese soldiers.” Originally a scholar, Zeng Guofan from Xiangxiang founded the Hunan army, and steered Chinese politics for decades. Chen Duxiu, one of the founders of the Communist Party of China, once exclaimed: “What is the Hunanese spirit? What daring scholars the likes of Zeng Guofan and Luo Zenan were — they had the guts to take great risks



and fight deadly battles!”

Tan Sitong from Liuyang is another example of Hunanese heroism. During the 1898 Reform Movement he was quoted as saying: “In other countries, reforms didn’t succeed until blood had been shed. Nobody in China is reported to have died for the sake of reform. That’s why China does not prosper. If there’s a price to be paid, start with me.” Hunan reported the heaviest casualties during the Revolution of 1910. On the Yuelu Mountain in Changsha are the tombs of twenty-nine revolutionary martyrs, including Huang Xing, Cai E, Jiang Yiwu and Chen Tianhua.

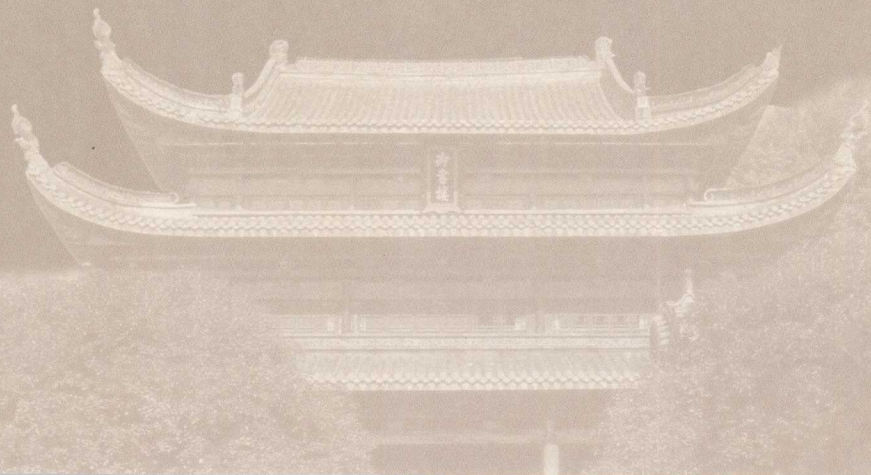
Seventeen years later Mao Zedong from Xiangtan launched the Autumn Harvest Uprising. In the years that followed, together with other revolutionaries and strategists, including Liu Shaoqi, Ren Bishi, Peng Dehuai, He Long and Luo Ronghuan, he co-guided the revolution that eventually led to the foundation of the People’s Republic of China.

Of the sixteen major battles during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, six took place in Hunan, including the battles of Changsha, the defense of Changde, and the defense of Hengyang. Even the ferocious Japanese were awed by the courage and toughness of the Hunanese. Chinese and Japanese armies fought three



fierce battles in Changsha between September 1939 and November 1942. In the third one alone the Japanese army sustained 50,000 casualties, marking the first major victory for coalition forces in the World War II in the Pacific region. A martyrs' memorial was built at the Hengshan Mountain for those who lost their lives fighting the Japanese invaders. After China won the last and one of the most significant battles of the war at the Xuefeng Mountain battle in Zhijiang in Hunan, Zhijiang was selected the first site for the surrender ceremony of the Japanese forces. On August 21, 1945, Imai Takeo, the Japanese army representative, came to the headquarters of the Chinese land forces to hand in the surrender document to the Chinese representative, He Yingqin.

In summer 1998 I joined a press visit to the Tianshan Mountains in Xinjiang, where I interviewed woman soldiers from Hunan who had left their homes in the 1950s to defend the nation's border. Even in northwest China where the population is a mingling of peoples from different ethnic groups from every corner of the nation, Hunan people still show their own distinct traits. Chen Hua, commander of the 142th Regiment of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, has the eye-catching word "Hunanese" printed on her business card. Throughout history, Hunan, way back in the interior, has made a remarkable contribution to the defense and development of Xinjiang: during the Qing Dynasty Zuo Zongtang carried a coffin with him to Xinjiang to show his resolve to recover lost territory; in 1949 the Kuomintang general Tao Zhiyue launched a uprising that led to the peaceful liberation of Xinjiang by CPC armies; in 1950 Wang Zhen led his soldiers in a campaign to reclaim wastelands and guard borders in Xinjiang; to meet this call thousands of Hunan girls joined the army and left home for the snow-clad Tianshan Mountains. Their courage and patriotism were an inspiration to later generations.



嶽麓書院

於斯為盛

惟楚有材

Hunan is also known for its brilliant achievements in culture and science. Literati of old thought Hunan was a remote and distant place of mystery and beauty, and accorded it the beautiful sobriquet “Elegant Xiang”.

Of the three ancient kings believed to be the ancestors of the Chinese people — Yan, Huang and Shun — Yan and Shun were buried in Hunan. Its Taoyuan County is the seat of the “Land of Peach Blossoms”, a legendary retreat of peace and happiness. Fenghuang is one of the two most beautiful small cities in China (the other is Changting in Fujian Province) and acknowledged internationally. The traditional Chinese greeting for an elder’s birthday is “May you live as long as the South Mountain,” — South Mountain being Hengshan Mountain in Hengyang, Hunan. The Yueyang Pavilion by the Dongting Lake is one of the three best known pavilions in ancient China. After its reconstruction in the Song Dynasty, the renowned scholar Fan Zhongyan wrote the classic essay *Remarks on Yueyang Pavilion*. Its best lines “be the first to worry about state affairs and the last to enjoy oneself” expresses deep concern for the nation and people, and have been widely recited by the following generations. Almost every

famous poet in Chinese history visited Hunan, leaving their traces and their works across its mountains and waters.

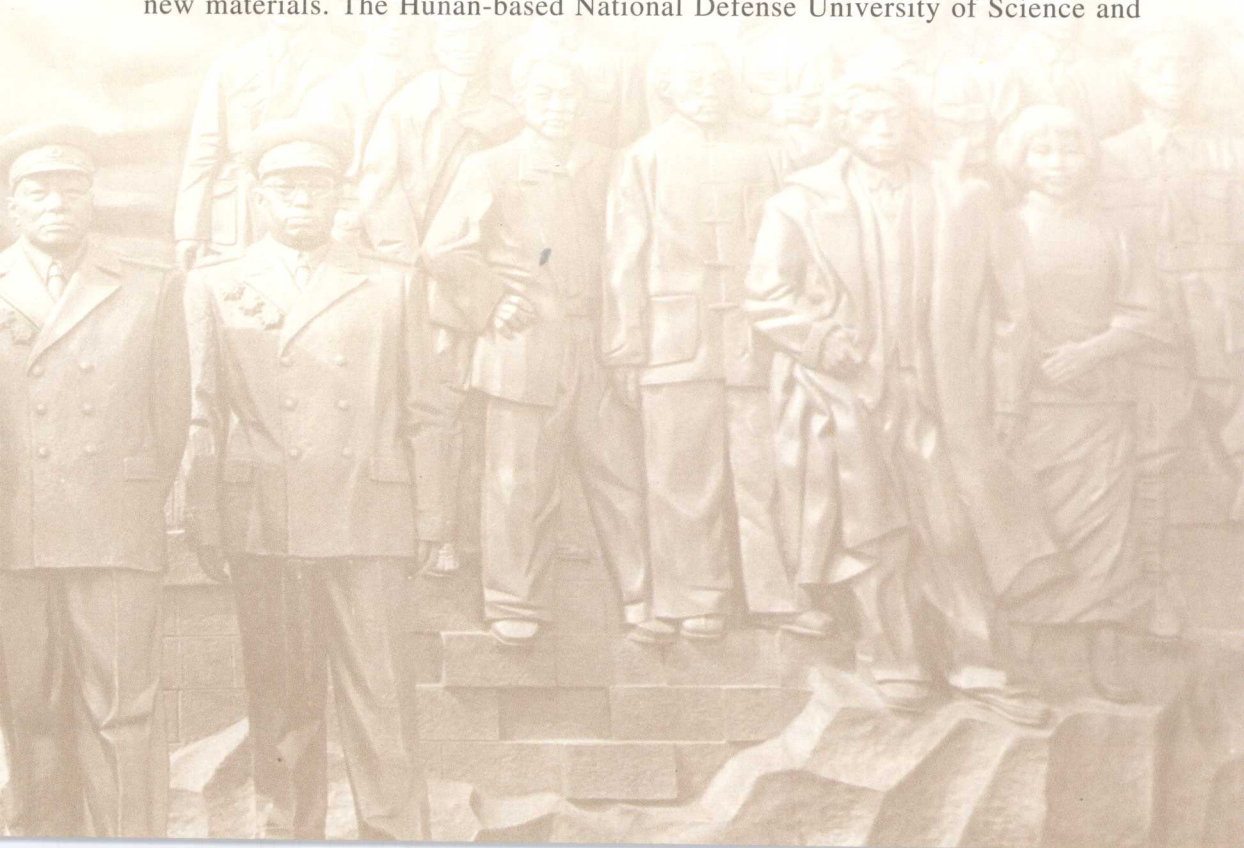
Hunan is the homeland of many luminaries. The ancient ones include the philosopher Wang Chuanshan (1619-92), the thinker and historian Wei Yuan (1794-1857), who was the first proponent of building China through studying Western science and technology, and China's first diplomats Guo Songtao (1818-91) and Zeng Jize (1839-90). Since the 20th century, Hunan has bred a galaxy of talented men and women: the historians Jian Bozan, Zhou Gucheng and Lu Zhenyu; the logicians Jin Yuelin and Cheng Qianfan; the writers Shen Congwen, Zhou Yang, Zhou Libo, Ding Ling, Zhu Xiang, Ye Zi, Bai Wei, Zhang Tianyi, Cheng Fangwu, Xiao San and Liao Mosha; the artist Qi Baishi, Lou Shibai and Huang Yongyu; the playwright Tian Han, the actors and directors Ouyang Yuqian and Ouyang Shanzun; the musicians Li Jinhui, He Luting, Lu Yi and Tan Dun; and particularly in recent years popular singers Li Guyi, Song Zuying, Zhang Ye, Wu Bixia, Tang Can, Gan Ping, Lei Jia and Wang Lida.

The 1,200-year-old Yuelu Academy in Changsha was one the four most famous schools in ancient China, and one of the world's oldest universities. Today it is still the seat of the Cultural Research Institute and the Humanities School of Graduate Studies



of the Hunan University. A paired couplet at the academy illustrates Hunan people's pride in their culture: "All schools of idealist philosophy in the south have their origin in the Lianxi school, as all rivers running toward the east are branches of the Xiangjiang River."

There is a popular belief that the Hunanese are good at studying, farming and fighting but not at economics. This is disproved by former Premier Zhu Rongji, who showed great insight and ability in running China's economy during his term in office. In the booming special economic zone of Shenzhen, many of its immigrant labor force are from Hunan. Some people say the Hunanese are small and weak, but at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 seven gold medal winners came from Hunan, more than from any other Chinese province. There is also talk that the province lags behind in science and technology. The fact is that many breakthroughs in scientific and technical research are made in Hunan. Professor Yuan Longping, the father of hybrid rice, has long been doing field studies in Hunan, and keeps on producing new breeds of high-yield rice. Professor and academician Xia Jiahui is a leading figure in genetic research. Another professor and academician Huang Boyun is a laureate expert in new materials. The Hunan-based National Defense University of Science and



Technology, Central South China University and other institutes have reported success in their “Galaxy” computer series, robot and maglev train projects. More than half of the super-scale bridges on the Yangtze River were designed or built by teams from Hunan. Hunan also has flourishing TV, publishing and newspaper sectors, with the Hunan Satellite TV and *Sports Weekly* being national hits. All visitors to Hunan are impressed by its long and brilliant history and culture, its pleasant natural environment and hospitable people.

What is the Hunanese spirit? Some quotes from Hunanese in history may provide a clue:

“There is a long way to go to cultivate my moral character, I will try my utmost to achieve it.” — Qu Yuan (339-278 BC)

“Be the first to worry about state affairs and the last to enjoy oneself.” — Fan Zhongyan (989-1052)

“I draw the sword crosswise, laughing to the sky, leaving a reputation for courage and nobility after my death.” — Tan Sitong (1865-98)

