



Performance by members of different ethnic groups at the closing ceremony of the 9th National Ethnic Games in Guiyang, Guizhou province.

WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Ethnic amalgamation with economic diversification

By QIU BO

Go deep enough into the history books looking for China's Guizhou province and you'll discover that this ethnic region has a long, splendid story to tell.

The Chinese classic, the *Shiji*, or Book of History, written by Sima Qian of the Han Dynasty (206 BC- AD 220), mentions Guizhou's Yelang as an early historical document.

These days, according to Wu Jun, a provincial ethnic affairs official, 39 percent of Guizhou's people are members of ethnic groups and

68 percent of its land is in autonomous prefectures.

"We have 252 autonomous towns — the biggest number of anywhere in China," Wu explained.

The provincial government has declared that its purpose is to protect this national culture and heritage.

Danzhai county, for example, has separate courses in its primary and high schools on their traditions, such as dance and embroidery.

The government stated 10 years ago that the province needs to hold regular cultural and sports events. It has already put on four national

cultural performances and seven sports galas and has courses on heritage at 1,000 local schools.

Many ethnic groups hold traditional events, such as the Yi group's Torch Festival, which are enjoyed by many groups, said Liu Gui, a Central University for Nationalities professor.

Liu, who studies folk culture, said it is rare to see the traditions so successfully passed on and shared by other groups, in other parts of the country.

"Guizhou is a microcosm of ethnic group amalgamation," he added.

Improving lives

And, although Guizhou has often been seen as one of China's less developed regions, it has nonetheless not slowed down in its attempts to improve the economy, especially in ethnic areas.

In 2010, its autonomous prefectures had a gross production value of almost 115 billion yuan, or a 51 percent increase over five years previous. Local per capita annual incomes reached 3,258 yuan, or an increase of nearly 50 percent during the same period.

The opening ceremony of the recent 9th National Eth-

nic Games in Guiyang, Guizhou's capital, surprised the large number of people who are interested in ethnic culture. The magnificent show was carried live by China's Central Television and seen by more than 130 million people and was an example of how the province has developed in recent years.

Li Yuanhao, a Workers Daily reporter, had this to say, "The ceremony really impressed all of us and was simply wonderful."

Another witness, Zeng Peilin, visitor from Jiangxi province, said, "I was overcome with admiration for the

performances. I could feel the happiness of people in Guizhou throughout the show."

Yang Jun, deputy head of the provincial tax bureau, told with obvious pride, "The province was founded 60 years ago, and, in all that time, this was the first time for it to independently hold such a large gathering and sports competition."

Liu, the professor, concluded, "It perfectly reflects (the idea) that ethnic groups should not concentrate just on their own traditions, but should develop the region's economy together with other groups with local government assistance."



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LIU GUI
PROFESSOR WITH THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY FOR NATIONALITIES

Some not-to-miss food items in Guizhou province

By XU LIN

Anyone visiting Guiyang, in southwestern China, this summer, will miss the coolness and the entertainment of the National Ethnic Games, but that doesn't mean you'll lose out entirely because there are still its delicious snacks — one of its most memorable features in fact.

You can spend a summer night in this capital of Guizhou province roaming along the food stalls and tasting scores of such street eats as barbecues meat and other local snacks, while washing it down with an

icy bottle of beer.

One of these is *Siwawa*, literally "baby threads", because it is thought to look like a newborn baby in swaddling clothes. The "clothes" part is actually a thin pancake, which is used to "swaddle" some shredded vegetables such as turnips, bean sprouts and cucumbers. You choose the stuffing from nearly 20 items and dip the rolled *siwawa* in sweet and sour sauce.

Another popular local dish is fried tofu balls, which were invented by a woman named Lei, about 70 years ago. The brown balls are dipped in a mix-

ture of soy sauce, chilis, benne oil, and vinegar. The surface is crispy while the inside is soft. Premier Zhou Enlai said he enjoyed these tofu balls during a visit to Guiyang in 1960.

Anyone visiting Huaxi Park which has many types of flowers and interesting stones, can drop by one famous place, the Huaxi beef noodle shop. Often you have to wait in line just to get a bowl of rice noodles covered with sliced beef, for the astonishingly low price of 7.5 yuan (\$1.2). But, it's worth the wait: The soup is thick and appetizing, the noodles are smooth and sticky, and the beef is fresh and tender. You can add a touch of red chili powder if you like, or garlic, salt, vinegar, or soy sauce.

Guiyang is known for its spicy food, which is typical of that part of China, but, for the diehard fans of sweeter foods, there are also plenty of choices.

One of these is the lotus leaf sticky rice cake. The sticky rice is first cooked by steaming then stir fried and made to look like a lotus leaf by using a pancake spatula to give it some wrinkles. It has a stuffing of sesame, peanuts, and walnuts.

The popular glutinous porridge is actually made of lotus root starch and some glutinous rice, with a sprinkling of sesame seeds, melon seeds and peanuts. The sticky cake-like substance is mixed with transparent jelly for full enjoyment.

And, last but not least, you need to try Guiyang's *tangyuan*, boiled glutinous rice balls, which come with more than a dozen types of stuffing such as dates, cherries, and rose petals.



Guizhou athlete shows off his particular skills in a demonstration for the ethnic games.

WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

'The best thing that ever happened'

By LEE HANNON

It ended just as spectacularly as it started.

The Ninth National Ethnic Games in Guizhou province closed on Sunday, in a grand finale, awash in a sea of color, diversity, music, and a dazzling fireworks display.

The eight-day event at the Guiyang Olympic Sports Center attracted more than 15,000 participants, more than 6,700 of them athletes taking part in 16 medal events and 186 demonstrations.

The final ceremony, named the "Blooming flowers, full moon", took place in the 70,000-sq-m, purpose-built stadium in front of a packed house of 50,000 people.

The crowds cheered with delight, waved their flags, and lit up the arena with the breathtaking flutter of a myriad of tiny lights while they were treated to a stun-

ning array of songs and dances from thousands of performers.

The most poignant moment of the seamless extravaganza came with the song "Don't go my friends", which echoed throughout the stadium.

And, Dai Bingguo, a state councilor, made the final announcement, declaring the "ninth National Ethnic Games of the People's Republic of China closed".

The flame that had been set alight by Guizhou's native son and Olympic boxing champion Zou Shiming, may have gone out, but the warmth it generated will continue for years to come.

A total of 129 finalists were crowned gold medalists after several days of intense competition, at 17 venues, which stretched across Guiyang.

For spectators and participants alike, the games were

more like a multi-ethnic carnival punctuated with sporting prowess and ethnic diversity.

"I'm really sad that it's ended," commented Xie Guanming, "the games have been very good and have brought our culture to the outside world. It's been great for Guizhou, but it's sad to see it come to an end."

Another observer, Zhao Kaiyin, said his province has never seen anything so spectacular: "This is the best thing that's ever happened here. We've never had anything like it before and it's made people very happy. The fireworks were excellent."

In fact, this sporting gala goes all the way back to 1953 when it was held in Tianjin as the first multi-ethnic event in the newly nascent People's Republic.

Then came a 29-year gap, when the second games

were not held until 1982, in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia. Since 1991, they have been held every four years and have built up momentum.

The previous games were held in Guangdong province, with some 8,000 athletes and officials involved. The next set will return to Inner Mongolia, in 2015.

But, in the end, it was really Guizhou itself that took the final award and the crowning glory, as the province entered the record books for holding the biggest, most spectacular games ever.



PENG NIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Digging into a dish of do-it-yourself 'baby threads' at a *siwawa* restaurant, where you can choose from nearly 20 stuffings, then dip the rolled delight in sweet and sour sauce.

