

# An important way to pass on ethnic culture

## Athletes and local officials in Guizhou have put a lot of time and sweat into these games, and expectations are running high

By QIU BO

China's 9<sup>th</sup> National Ethnic Games will begin on Sept 10, in Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou province and the country's ethnic groups have a lot of hopes for the games.

The hosts of the event are the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and the General Administration of Sport, with backing from the central government's State Council. They are being organized by the provincial government.

Both the athletes and local officials have put a lot of time and sweat into the event, and people across the nation have been waiting expectantly to get a look at this once-every-four-years sporting event.

The games run for nine days with the opening ceremony being held Saturday evening. They have at least 16 types of events, as well as some non-competitive demonstrations and a special event for guests from various ethnic groups.

The officials are expecting more than 20,000 athletes, guests, and volunteer helpers, not to mention the, at least 1,000, reporters from across the country.

And, of course there is a mascot — the "Guizhou Dragon". The inspiration for this came from the dinosaurs that are believed to have roamed the area around Xingyi about 240 million years ago. And the mascot's green skin conveniently symbolizes the beauty of the environment of Guizhou.

And there is a logo for the games that can be read either as a "G" — that is, Guizhou — or the number "9", which is a homophone for the word "long" in Chinese, and, in this case, refers to the different ethnic groups working together for a long time.

### Unity

Yang Jing, the organizing committee chairman, who is also head of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, spoke to the media and said that these national ethnic group games are one important way for the various groups to pass on their history and culture.

"The games started in 1953, and have never stopped developing themselves. And they've made a great contribution to the uniting of all ethnic groups as one," Yang said.

Guizhou's governor, Zhao Kezhi, went further by saying, "It's an honor for Guizhou to be chosen to host the ethnic group games and it shows the charm of our land here."

Zhao explained that Guizhou's ethnic groups account for 36 percent of the population, and that ethnic autonomous areas account for more than half its land.

"But, when it comes to the people of Guizhou, whether they're from the province or somewhere else, whether they're Han or ethnic groups, they have all contributed to its economic development," he added.

Chen Yiqin, head of the Party's publicity department

in Guizhou, held a press conference last month, where she remarked that, "The media from China and overseas are welcome to come and see these traditional ethnic sports."

### Measures

Over the nearly 60 years of their development, the games have become an influential nationwide event. After the second games, held in Inner Mongolia, they changed to a four-year cycle. This is Guizhou province's first crack at holding the games, so there is obviously

a lot of excitement here.

The organizing committee has said that it has done everything possible to guarantee that the games go smoothly. Wang Fuyu, deputy Party chief of Guizhou, has said that more than 10,000 police will be on duty and, around 455 buses will be made available to shuttle spectators around.

The committee reported last week that at least 58 hotels in Guiyang are ready for the participants and visitors.

A reception team, staffed mostly by volunteers, has been set up with groups working round-the-clock to send people to the airport and railway station to receive delegations.

The last games were held in Guangdong province, in 2007, with some 8,000 athletes and officials taking part.



Spectators show up for event the dressed in their native costumes.

ZHAO HUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Final rehearsal on the eve of the opening ceremony.

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Performance based on ancient ethnic rites.

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## Spicy welcome to the southwest

By TIFFANY TAN

That big packet of chili sauce with the picture of a Miao woman smiling broadly, which came with my meal on the flight to Guizhou, should have tipped me off to the mealtime welcome I'd get in this southern province -- hot and spicy, with a this-is-me, take-it-or-leave-it attitude.

My real initiation came in the form of *suantangyu*, a mouthwatering Miao dish and apparently its most famous. It contains pieces of fish, or the whole animal (sometimes still wriggling), dumped into a pot of orangey-red liquid. And, true to its name, it was indeed sour, but someone had carelessly left out the more crucial part, that is "spicy".

I couldn't be sure about

what it was that left me gasping, the soup — made with tomatoes, rice, water and fragrant mountain peppers — or the dip -- a mixture of chili sauce, tofu and spring onions.

"Oh, just so-so," commented Zhang Yu, a 21-year-old intern at our bureau in Guiyang, the provincial capital, when I asked whether she also found the dish intolerably hot. If only she knew: the last time I admitted defeat to a spicy dish was two years ago, in a struggle with a tasty "medium hot" Chongqing hot pot.

The Miao rice wine that traditionally comes with the *suantangyu* wasn't much help for my burning mouth. The sweet tasting drink contains 17 percent alcohol, and obviously wasn't designed for liquor lightweights like me.

The dessert we got at the Hequn Lu night market was a much better antidote. The *bingfen*, jelly in iced pineapple juice, was being sold alongside other popular snacks such as *siwawa*, a sort of do-it-yourself spring roll, and *lianai* *tofu* (tofu in love), or grilled tofu stuffed with chopped radishes, green onions and spices.

Nearby, in some glass cabinets I found more interesting offerings that were begging to go with beer: pig's kidneys, tails and ears; rooster's comb; chicken feet; and dog meat. The biggest demand for dog in Guizhou supposedly comes in winter since the meat is known to help heat up the body. The young people I've met so far say they don't like the taste.

Guiyang was made for night owls. In addition to the food market on Hequn Lu, there are others on Qingyun Lu and Shaanxi Lu, with hundreds of stalls open from 7 pm till 4 am, every day of the week.

I was curious. "Who on earth comes here in the wee hours of the morning, on weekdays?" I asked one of the vendors. "Don't they have to go to work the following day?" She gave me a puzzled look, clearly finding the question odd.

Maybe what the locals say about themselves is true: They're some of the most laid-back Chinese around, who like to take their time with food and drink. Obviously, and at any time of the day or night.

## Why not try out these exotic sports

By QIU BO

The Ninth National Ethnic Games will run from Sept 10 to 18, with an ethnic group gala on Sept 15, and **eight** days of matches.

There will be **129** winners, from **16** general competitive events, including the dragon-boat race, equestrian events, wrestling, and pearl ball. There are also **186** non-competitive demonstrations.

There are expected to be about **5,221** contestants in **34** teams, representing different regions of the country, at **17** venues in the Yunyan, Nanming, Jinyang, and Huaxi districts of Guiyang, and in Qingzhen town. Presiding over this will be **1,335** officials, referees, and coaches, with assistance from **15,000** volunteers.

Some of the more exotic events include:

### Pearl Ball

This is a traditional Man-

chu sport that grew out of the pearl diving business. It uses a ball made of white leather and the clam-shaped racket made of resin.

The arena is 28 meters by 15 meters and is separated into three areas — the competition, defense, and scoring zones. Each team has six athletes: three in the competitive zone, two with rackets in the defense zone, and one with a net in the scoring zone.

The athletes in the competing zone work together to try to get the ball into the opponent's net, while the two in the defense zone use their rackets to keep the competition from scoring. The match has two halves, each lasting 15 minutes, with a 10-minute break.

The team with the most points wins.

Time: Preliminary contest, Sept 13; finals, Sept 18.

Venues: Guiyang physical training arena and Liuguangmen play area.

### Spinning Top

This traditional folk sport comes with a long history among the southern ethnic groups such as the Wa, Yao, and Zhuang. The sport can be traced back several thousand years.

The top is a conical wooden toy that balances on a point while spinning and is set in motion by the hand, and kept in motion by being whipped or by pulling a string wrapped around it. The match has a cycle of attacking and defending.

The defending side put their top in the arena and the attacking side throw theirs onto the arena to hit the spinning top. The attacking side score when the defense's top has been pushed out of the arena or when their own top out-spins the defense's.

Points are gained only by the attacking side. The team with more points wins.

This Spinning Top activ-

ity is so prevalent on the streets of Guizhou that you can find people here and there whipping their tops morning and evening. The heaviest tops weigh about 5 kilograms.

Time: Preliminary contest, Sept 13; finals, Sept 17.

Venues: Subsidiary facility of Guiyang Olympic Center, and Jinyang play area.

Zhang Yu contributed to the story



What would an opening ceremony be without a grand fireworks display?

ZHAO HUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



中华人民共和国  
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The 9<sup>th</sup> National Ethnic Games of Ethnic Minorities of the People's Republic of China  
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