

## CHINA

## Traditional treatments soothe patients' pains

Ethnically diverse Guizhou makes most of unique medicine systems

By YANG JUN and LIU BOQIAN  
in Tongren, Guizhou

Southwest China's Guizhou province has for centuries been a melting pot for as many as 48 of the country's 56 ethnic groups, creating a diverse mix of culture, tradition and systems of medicine.

In a small clinic in the Guizhou city of Tongren, Bai Yutao uses traditional techniques of the Qiang ethnic group to treat his patients.

The acupuncturist immerses polished white stones into a bubbling broth of medicinal herbs before wrapping them in cloth and rolling them across a patient's back. The warmth seeps deep into the muscles, releasing tension with each slow stroke.

This "white-stone therapy" blends traditional Qiang techniques with modern medical care.

Guizhou's ethnic diversity has become a valuable asset, and by preserving these cultural practices and integrating them with elements of the modern world, the province has made a name for itself in the TCM industry.

At Jiangkou County Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Bai, who is also a rehabilitation physician, said field research among Qiang communities in Sichuan province and elsewhere has helped his team adapt manual techniques so as to comply with clinical regulations and drug use standards.

"The Qiang have long been skilled at treating trauma and contusions," he said.

"We have taken proven methods from those communities and used them as extra help to relieve joint pain and similar conditions."

Like many ethnic healing systems, Miao and Qiang medicine



Farmers tend barrenwort grown in a greenhouse in Jiangkou county, Guizhou province. PHOTOS BY LIU BOQIAN / CHINA DAILY



Workers process herbs used in traditional medicine in Jiangkou.

historically included shamanistic elements and were passed down orally. Traditional healers remain common in Guizhou, but their

numbers are shrinking as younger generations pursue formal education and urban jobs.

For many like Bai, traditional

medicine is more of a cultural inheritance. "We need to protect the cultural roots of these medicines," he said. "At the same time we must make them safe, effective and accessible to more people."

In China, practitioners of alternative medicine must receive a modern medical education, pass professional exams and hold a license to practice. Some experienced herbal practitioners have received licenses under a separate system in recognition of many years of effective practice.

Last year, Tongren was approved to establish a national pilot zone for the inheritance and innovative development of TCM.

The pilot has focused on standardizing treatment and on regulating medicinal materials used in hospitals.

As part of that effort, authorities have established 13 municipal

TCM quality control centers, drafted quality standards and codified 17 external-treatment procedures derived from Tujia ethnic medicine. Working with the market supervision bureau, they have issued management rules and tightened in-hospital controls on medicinal materials.

Beyond clinical oversight, the region is turning its unique plant resources into economic opportunity. Smallholders and cooperatives are building supply chains that reach national and international markets.

At a barrenwort nursery in Jiangkou county, workers tend seedlings inside greenhouses. Known in Chinese medicine for strengthening tendons and bones, barrenwort is listed in the *Chinese Pharmacopoeia* and has become a staple of medicines and supplements.

The Party secretary of Minhe township, where the nursery is located, said Jiangkou's mountainous, humid climate is well-suited for the plant.

In 2020, State-owned China National Pharmaceutical Group partnered with local cooperatives and farmers to build the country's largest barrenwort breeding and seedling base, covering some 62.7 hectares.

The project provides technical guidance and purchase guarantees to participating villagers.

For many local families, the change has been visible. "My family used to grow corn and rice and barely made any money," said villager Xiao Shuqun, who works at the nursery. "I leased out my 6 mu (15 mu is equal to one hectare) of land to grow barrenwort. I can earn more than 80 yuan (\$11.23) a day working here."

At 55, she said she no longer has to farm herself and enjoys a steady income.

Companies in Guizhou are also exporting the region's aromatic and medicinal raw materials.

Guizhou Miaoyao Biotech Co, which focuses on essential oils and plant extract, said more than half of its ingredients are exported to the United States for use in wellness products.

Founder Lu Guilin said valerian oil is one of its major export items, supported by a planting base of more than 2,000 hectares, which supplies essential oil internationally. Lu said the company's network includes more than 3,000 cooperative households and provides an estimated more than 200,000 work opportunities a year.

He added that the company plans to expand the promotion of its own branded products, including post-exercise soothing formulas developed with modern extraction techniques based on ancient recipes.

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## Singer's dedication to local opera undimmed by age

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The morning air in Fuzhou, one of China's historical cradles of opera, is still and clear.

From an old courtyard, a familiar melody flows softly into the street — the voice of Wan An'an, a national-level inheritor of Fuzhou Tea-picking Opera, warming up for another day of practice.

At 84, Wan still begins each morning with song, her clear notes carrying the essence of an art that has shaped her life for more than seven decades. "I can't go a day without singing," she said with a gentle smile. "It's already a part of me."

Born in Linchuan district of Fuzhou in Jiangxi province, Wan grew up at a time when Fuzhou Tea-picking Opera was woven into daily life.

Developed from local folk tunes and performed in the Fuzhou dialect, the art form is known for its lively rhythm, bright tone and expressive gestures. It tells the stories of ordinary people — their labor, joy and resilience — through a distinct "tea flavor" in both voice and emotion.

"In Fuzhou, many seniors can hum a few lines of Tea-picking Opera," Wan said. "Such a unique art should never be forgotten. It needs



Wan An'an (left) performs in a Fuzhou Tea-picking Opera show in Fuzhou, Jiangxi province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

to be passed on from generation to generation, so that more young people can stand on stage and carry it forward."

At 14, Wan was selected to join the Fuzhou Tea-picking Opera Troupe.

"The conditions were tough then," she said. "We had no professional tutors or proper props, but we dedicated ourselves wholeheartedly to performing."

Her breakthrough came in 1959, when she played the role of Xiaolan in the revolutionary drama *Red Pine Forest*. The performance brought her national attention and the opportunity to perform for state leaders — a moment she remembers as both overwhelming and unforgettable.

Her signature singing style, described by critics as bright, sweet and rich in "tea flavor", has become emblematic of the genre. "Tea-picking Opera is not about emperors or generals," she said. "It's about the people — about their songs and their lives. It must stay rooted."

In 2011, Fuzhou Tea-picking Opera was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage item. The following year, Wan was officially recognized as its national representative inheritor.

Though she retired from the troupe in 2001, she never left the stage completely. Instead, she devot-

ed herself to teaching, guiding new generations of performers with patience and precision.

"You must practice every day," she often said to her students. "On stage, you can't perform for yourself alone — you need to interact with the audience. Only then can the play come alive."

Her classes combine rigorous training with creative imagination. Classic excerpts such as *Selling Flowers* and *Mending the Vest* are used to teach the coordination of eyes, hands, body and steps — the foundation of the craft.

"Basic skills and imagination are equally important," Wan said. "When students can feel the rhythm and emotion of the role, that's when they truly understand the beauty of Tea-picking Opera."

In recent years, cross-cultural exchanges have injected fresh inspiration into Fuzhou's cultural scene.

Since 2016, the city has staged the Tang Xianzu International Theater Exchange Month six times. On Oct 24, the curtain rose on its seventh edition. As part of the event, a troupe from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom performed an English adaptation of *The Peony Pavilion*. The romantic tragicomedy play was written by dramatist Tang Xianzu in 1598. The performance built a symbolic bridge between traditional Chinese opera and Western theater.

Wan welcomed the development. "It's not just an artistic exchange," she said. "It's a deep dialogue between Eastern and Western cultures. Fuzhou Tea-picking Opera can also learn from Western stagecraft and enrich its artistic expression."

Even now, Wan continues to take part in workshops and performances, her dedication undimmed by age. "I hope Tea-picking Opera can preserve its traditional charm while embracing modern elements," she said. "It deserves a broader stage and a brighter future."

Liu Chenxi in Nanchang contributed to this story.

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## China, Russia universities unveil joint institute in Chongqing

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI  
in Chongqing

China's Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications and Russia's Far Eastern Federal University announced on Nov 4 the establishment of a joint institute.

The Joint Institute of Far Eastern Federal University and Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications was unveiled in Chongqing, where the two higher education providers will collaborate in the fields of information and communications.

According to Wang Yang, dean of the new institute, it is the first and only approved Sino-Russian cooperative educational institution in the field of engineering within these two regions (China's central and western regions and Russia's Far East).

Boris Korobets, president of Far Eastern Federal University, at the unveiling ceremony said: "The successful implementation of this project is a natural outcome of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership. We are not simply establishing a joint institute; rather, we are meticulously creating a unique and harmonious educational ecosystem that organically integrates the essence of both academic traditions."

"Our shared mission is to transform the substantial intellectual capital of Russia and China into a driving force that leads in technology and industry standards, shaping a new paradigm for the global information space in the 21st century," he said.

The joint institute will offer a curriculum with four-year undergraduate majors in computer science and technology, digital media technology, and internet of things engineering, alongside three-year master's programs in information and communication engineering, computer science and technology, and control science and engineering.

Wang said the collaborative



Representatives from Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications and Russia's Far Eastern Federal University pose at the launch ceremony for the joint institute. DENG RUI / CHINA DAILY

spirit of the endeavor aims to cultivate interdisciplinary talents equipped with international perspectives and practical skills. The institute will integrate resources from both universities in digital intelligence technology, involving enterprises from both countries to nurture talents critical for national strategies, he said.

The partnership's roots date back to 2023, when the universities signed a memorandum of understanding at an APEC international educational subforum during the 8th Eastern Economic Forum. By early last year, a formal cooperative education agreement was in place, leading to the swift approval by the Ministry of Education.

The joint institute has already enrolled its first cohort of 100 students in the IoT engineering program, drawing candidates from eight provinces and cities across China. Plans are underway to expand enrollment to approximately 1,650 students over the next four years, offering more young people access to high-quality international education.

Graduates of the program will receive degrees from both universities, with preferential placement in sectors such as information and communication

business development, and related technological cooperation fields in both countries. This strategic focus ensures that the institute not only contributes to educational excellence but also supports economic and technological exchanges between China and Russia.

Wang said that as the joint institute embarks on this ambitious journey, it stands as a beacon of international cooperation, setting a new standard for Sino-Russian collaboration in engineering higher education.

According to a recent report by the Information Telegraph Agency of Russia, in the current academic year, over 56,000 Chinese students are studying in Russia, while more than 21,000 Russian students are studying in China.

On Aug 25, the education ministers of both countries exchanged views on deepening Sino-Russian educational cooperation. They reached a consensus on enhancing practical collaboration in areas such as interuniversity partnerships, joint talent development, collaborative research and language teaching.

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