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I woke up today in the beautiful Golden Dragon Hotel in Kaili, Guizhou Province. Guizhou is home to over 80 different ethnic minority groups. Kaili is situated in eastern Guizhou and is not an impressive scenic locale. Its appearance resembles a drab, abandoned industrial city, even though there never was much industry to be found in Kaili.

A highlight of today's agenda was a visit to a Miao, or Hmong village. The Miao are one of the 55 ethnic minority groups within China. We attended a lecture on the Miao at a gallery the night before and learned that the Miao are a very diverse group and were very isolated from each other historically. In China this diverse group is called the Miao, but many Miao live in other areas of Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, and are referred to as the Hmong. Our lecturer noted that one obvious sign of this diversity is evident in the clothing worn by Miao women. She cited one example as the dress length used by Miao women in traditional clothing. For example, the women that settled near a river bank, as some Miao did, wore long skirts. Yet the Miao that settled in the mountain regions wore shorter skirts because they were easier to wear while for climbing. However, in spite of the differences that exist within the Miao grouping, the Miao have been lumped together under the Chinese ethnic identification system.

We took a bus and headed southwest to the Qingman Village. This village is 700 years old and is home to approximately 700 families. The village is on the south-facing slope, nested in the junction of two valleys and is situated amidst a landscape of limestone karst. This location is considered to be good feng shui for the village. At the base of the village is a coalmine. As we ascend the hill to reach the village the land is layered with crops and dotted with haystacks. We traveled up the mountain on dirt roads and passed under power lines, spotted tombs in the distance, and a smattering of rock walkways. I spotted fields of corn and sweet potatoes generally located on the higher elevations where they are rain-fed and passed many rice terraces on the lower elevations where irrigation is easier. Chris, our guide, noted that they can produce two crops a year here; one summer and one winter.

The homes are large dark brown wooden structures made from the wood of fir trees (*shan mu*). The villagers cannot cut the trees down without permission from the "head man" of the village. Each house has a circle of life symbol at its top signifying good luck. The house is sort of a box shape that contains the living quarters and there are rafters above for storing grain. The main physical feature of the house is called a beauty backrest (*meinu kao*) and is located in the center of the upper level. The Miao women are known for their beautiful embroidery. The beauty backrest is where women would sit and embroider. *Meinu* means beautiful woman and *kao* means lean back.

We received a warm welcome from the people we met on the streets. The women we saw all wore their hair pinned up and were walking with children. Some men and women were busy with what appeared to be chores in the fields and around the houses. A few young children, three boys and two girls about 7 years old, escorted us on our visit

through the village. How I wish I spoke their language as they were chatting incessantly and I would love to have been able to ask them their impressions of us among other things. We gave the children pencil cases containing pencils and writing paper. They seemed to be really fascinated as Xinmin (Yale – PIER leader) and Chris (our guide) wrote their own names in English.

This is a village that is not yet receiving a great deal of tourism but I assume it will in the near future as many once remote parts of China are now adjusting to an influx of tourists, both Chinese and foreign. The increased tourism in China has the potential for both positive and negative aspects. I'm glad that I visited the Qingman Village before it is impacted by tourism and I am curious to see the impending changes ten or so years from now. I don't know that we will still be so warmly received by the people once the economic impact of tourism, or perhaps the perceived economic impact, is understood. At that point, will we be viewed as a potential economic opportunity instead of as travelers with whom to share a brief encounter?