

## Miao villages: Basha and Xijiang

After Zhaoxing I moved on to a couple Miao villages, the first was village called Basha. A very traditional Miao settlement were the men and women still where traditional cloths. Like the Dong, the Miao build with pegged wood and no nails but the Miao villages lack the drum towers that you see in many Dong villages. The guesthouse in Basha, only one, (which took a bit of work to find I had to wonder around motioning sleep to people because they weren't understanding my attempts at Chinese), was one of the least comfortable I'd been in. It had no shower at all, a grubby Asian toilet

on the ground floor, and no fan in the room forcing me to leave the window open inviting a large number of insects of all sizes buzzing around me all night. Throw in a rock hard "bed" and couple of big spiders (like the one I sent a picture of in an earlier report), one of them which decided to hang out on the wall about a foot from where my head was resting all night, and you can see how I didn't want to stay another night. However, the village was nice and the area like most of the region was beautiful. The village, divided into a number of smaller hamlets, sits perched on a mountain ridge with rice terraces bellow and sweeping views across the valleys. It is area that also seems poised to be developed for tourism with bilingual signs around the hamlet nearest the road. This influx of tourists seems to yet be realized, the village gets a few Chinese tourist, who seem to barely stray from where their van parks, and a trickle of Western tourist, I was the only one staying in the village on the day I was there. Of course with the facilities at the aforementioned guesthouse maybe I can see why.

From Basha I headed northwest to the largest Miao settlement of Xijiang, a very picturesque set of wood buildings stretching up the green hillside. There is not as much traditional dress in Xijiang as in Basha, the younger women tend to where flowers in there hair, while the older women have adapted the modern/traditional look of wearing towels on there heads, a substitute for what once would have been embroidered cloths. I stayed with a woman who rents out rooms in her house to foreign guests. It was a great place to stay. My first day in town amazingly enough



**Woman knitting while watching over water buffalo, Basha.**



**Woman weaving on a loom, Basha.**

there were three other Americans staying there as well. A couple who had taught English in China for a year, from the bay area and a woman from San Francisco who liked the area so much she had spent 2 weeks in Xijiang. The woman who ran the guesthouse/home-stay really made you feel like part of the family. We all went over to have a big meal for the naming of her sister in-law's baby. That was a fun event where



**View of Xijiang.**

instead of people showing up bringing wine bottles they brought live chickens. When one of the chickens was slaughtered and bled into a bowl we began to worry, thinking this is how people get bird flu. However thankfully we were not served chicken blood, so I don't have to write a revision to the previous top 5 list, and our worst fault was being forced to drink more baijiu than we cared for. It was entertaining to watch the old women force each other to drink, laughing and having a great time while trying in vain to avoid anymore alcohol at the same time trying to force it on others. There was also a minor festival going on in town which had to do with the time before the



**Collecting the blood from the slaughtered chicken, Xijiang.**

rice harvest. It is apparently a time for courtship between young Miao men and women. In the evening, they gather around the main square market area and mingle, with the bolder boys going up to the girls and the girl's pretending to lack interest. On the bus ride in to town I saw a couple of water buffalo fights, which like animal sports in general are probably more interesting if you are betting on them. Basically, the water buffalos lock horns for a while and eventually one runs away and loses and that's about it. The highlight of the festival for me was playing some basketball in the main square, with a pretty good size gallery of onlookers. Having not played in six months and having to play in hiking boots I was not at the top of my game but I managed to hold my own. I'm managed to get a couple oows from the crowd on a couple drives and a block, although I was given the weaker team, and we only managed to win one of the 4 or 5 games. I felt better later when I saw guys who I played against playing in a real referred game on the same court. They were obviously in better shape than I was because I was pretty much wiped out by the last two games. I'm in pretty good hiking shape but it is certainly not

basketball shape and I was sore for the next two days. Basketball is without doubt the most popular sport in China these days and just by the sheer number of people playing there is definitely going to be more and more NBA players coming out of China in the next decade.



**Some of the guys I was playing basketball with, Xinjiang.**



**Not one of the guys I was playing basketball with, but I liked the jersey pipe ensemble.**



**Water buffalo fights near Xinjiang.**



**Old women sitting around eating at the baby naming dinner in Xinjiang.**



**Women forcing each other to drink at the baby naming dinner in Xinjiang.**



**Woman forcing me to drink at the baby naming dinner in Xinjiang.**



**Women having a good time at baby naming dinner in Xinjiang.**



**Woman posing with little girl at the baby naming dinner in Xinjiang.**



**The house in the middle, top row, was where I stayed in Xinjiang. In fact if you look hard you can see my shirt and towel hanging out the window of my room just to the right of the top branch in the foreground.**



**Girl eating a watermelon at the market in Xinjiang.**



**Old man, Xinjiang.**



**Old man, Basha.**



**Young girl, Basha**



**Woman washing, Basha.**



**Woman in the rice fields, Basha.**





**Woman weaving on her loom,  
Basha.**

**Warning next page has a picture of a dead hanging dog, likely to be eaten, in case you would rather not see.**



**Dog hanging up outside a house in Basha. I didn't wait around for a dinner invitation. I wonder which dogs they decide to eat since almost everyone has pet dogs as well. Although they mainly seem to function as vacuum cleaners around the dinner table and guard dogs to bark at passing foreigners.**