

CITIES OF CHINA

Guiyang: The Philosopher City

Intelligent Design and Progressive Growth Mold a Metropolis

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Guiyang: The Philosopher City

Intelligent Design and Progressive Growth Mold a Metropolis

*By Lowell Bennett with
Research Assistants Tong Yuge and Zhang Xinyu*



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The China International Publishing Group's Foreign Languages Press is currently publishing the "Cities of China" series. I believe this is a very timely move, and one of great significance.

The Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle once said, "Men come together in cities in order to live; they remain together in order to enjoy life."

In 1800, only two percent of the world's population lived in cities. By 2007, this rate had soared to over 50 percent. The UN predicts that by 2010 urban dwellers will make up 55 percent of the world's total population. Today, the pace and scale of urbanization, which is unprecedented in the history of humanity, indicates that the world is entering a new era.

The steady rise of a group of developing countries represents one of the most striking trends in international relations of this century. The population of these countries adds up to over half of the world's total population. The level of change and the number of countries involved are also unprecedented in human history. All the countries concerned share one common feature, that is, they are going through a simultaneous process of industrialization and urbanization. In the context of the rapid and extensive urbanization, due attention must be paid to the challenges the cities face.

In this regard, the theme "Better City, Better Life" of the 2010 World Expo Shanghai, China, responds to the tide of human development. It is the first time in the World Expo history that the city becomes the theme, as confirmed by the support from the Bureau of International Exhibitions (BIE) members.

The "Cities of China" series is characterized by a foreign perspective on China's cities. As the world's oldest civilization with an uninterrupted history going back thousands of years, China boasts a profound urban culture which constitutes an important component of its civilization. The world's first city with a population of half a million was Linzi in China, and the world's first city with a one million population, Chang'an (today's Xi'an), was also in China. Today, fast-developing cities of all sizes are scattered throughout the country. Among them, metropolises like Beijing and Shanghai are well-known throughout the world while smaller ones, though less known, have their own charms. They are the focus of the "Cities of China" series. New and dynamic cities like Nanjing, Kunshan, Nantong and Wuxi covered by this series will help the readers know better China's urbanization and development.

The books in this series are written by foreign writers familiar with an English-speaking readership. They show the important aspects of Chinese cities and their cultures.

The past 100 years have witnessed many twists and turns in China's revolution and rebuilding. There was a period in which we severely criticized and even negated our own culture. Now, however, with China's rise, our people are becoming ever more appreciative of their own culture and are trying to rediscover it. The "Cities of China" series is designed to assist with this process. People from other countries have a perspective that is quite different from our own. They are more likely to notice the things that we take for granted and overlook. As a Chinese idiom says, "Advice from others may help one overcome one's shortcomings." An outsider's view of China's cities can give us a broader picture of our own urban culture.

Western culture has made great contributions to the world. Without it, we would not have been in a position to enjoy our material wealth and our rapidly developing science and technology. The whole world has something to learn from Western culture. But, we also have to realize that Western culture, like any other culture, has its own weaknesses. While it has certainly driven human civilization forward, it has brought with it many problems. Over the past few centuries, the world has been dominated by Western culture, and the Eastern contributions have been overlooked. In the 21st century, it is time once again for Eastern culture to make its presence felt. The "Cities of China" series can help the world to better understand and learn from the East, and thereby find solutions to the problems created by and faced by all our cities.

The Shanghai World Expo in China is a great event for human civilization. The publishing of this series will make a significant contribution to the World Expo movement. I wish it great success!

Wu Jianmin
Honorary President of the Bureau of International Exhibitions
April 2010, Beijing



Maple Lake. (Photo by CFP)

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Foreword

In Chinese terminology, “Gui” is the equivalent of the surname of the city of Guiyang. The word means “noble.”

Why might Guiyang be considered noble? Because of its elegance, as embodied in the Jiaxiu Tower; because of its grace, as displayed in the Qianling Mountain; and because of its ambition and culture. Although it’s not a big city, not rich nor famous, it has produced a number of great and outstanding people who have made a significant contribution to the city and the country. As it says in the *I Ching (Book of Changes)*:

“Strong and weak figures interwoven with each other ornament the sky. Elegance and intelligence in moderation characterize the observances that adorn human (society). We look at patterns in the sky to ascertain the changes of the seasons. We look at the patterns of society to understand how the processes of transformation are accomplished under heaven.”

I still remember the 1960s, when I was preparing for the middle school entrance exam. My parents hoped I would be admitted to the Guiyang First Middle School, which was the best middle school of Guizhou Province. As a saying went, “Guiyang is surnamed ‘Gui’ and the First Middle School ranks first.” I studied extremely hard, and on my application form for middle school I had three choices. I entered First Middle School for all of them. I achieved outstanding exam scores, and was able to realize my dream.

At that time the First Middle School even had a Western classical music orchestra to help its students engage with the fine traditions of human culture:

*“Swallows that skimmed by painted eaves of noble houses in bygone days,
Are dipping now around the doors of humble homes.”*

In my first year I was selected for the orchestra as a cellist. The cello was an unusual Western instrument at the time. It was therefore remarkable, in a southwestern mountain city whose traditional culture aspired to be “Gui” (noble) although it was not very wealthy, that a school which had the ambition to be “the first” although it was not wealthy either should have such a musical course available, and that it should teach me to become a competent amateur cellist.

China’s cultural tradition also emphasizes the value of a musical education in improving moral standards and civilization. *The Book of Rites* says,

“... (use) ceremonies to direct men’s aims aright; music to give harmony to their voices; laws to unify their conduct; and punishments to guard against their tendencies to evil. The end to which ceremonies, music, punishments, and laws conduct is one; they are the instruments by which the minds of the people are assimilated, and good order in government is made to appear.”

It also encourages “noble man” to “make extensive use of music in order to perfect his instructions” and believes that “when the music has free course, the people direct themselves to the quarter (to which they should proceed).” “It is by the Odes that the mind is aroused. It is by the Rules of Propriety that the character is established. It is from music that the finish is received.” This Confucian adage determined the course of the Chinese nation in spiritual pursuits through a period of millennia.

All around the world, the popularity of high culture creates an ideal environment for cultivating able and innovative talent. Today the Chinese nation, which is striving to breed able and innovative talents, and especially masters, must promote high culture and explore the essence of all the classical cultures created by humanity.

These two ideas only entered my mind today. But perhaps I have been reflecting on them subconsciously ever since I lived in Guiyang.

When people are over 60, they start to miss their hometowns.

*"Returning to Guiyang for many times in dreams,
I hold tightly the Qianling Mountains.
The Huaxi River is as deep as my affection
And as beautiful as my dreams."*

Sometimes in my dreams I am still playing the cello in the Guiyang First Middle School, watched by the stern yet kind "Music Hu" (my music teacher Hu Qiwen, who has passed away): I become anxious as I struggled to find the right notes, then proud as I succeed in playing something fair-sounding. Recently, while the central authorities were calling for great development and the prospering of socialist culture I rediscovered the cello I would use in my childhood. Busy at work, I could only practice a little in my spare time. And not having touched my cello for so many decades, my skills were very limited.

Former Vice Premier Li Lanqing is proficient in classical music. He said, "We should cultivate highly-qualified and innovative talents, particularly masters, to energize our nation. So it is necessary to advocate high culture and improve education in the arts, including music, among intellectuals and especially young intellectuals." When he learned that I was an amateur cellist, he offered me encouragement. With that encouragement, I dared to play two cello solos at the orchestral evening of the Central Institute of Socialism, with the accompaniment of the China Philharmonic Orchestra. Later, several ministers and I organized together a group called "The Music Fans' Quintet." We performed a concert in the Beijing Concert Hall, which was covered by China Central Television (CCTV). Comrade Li Lanqing offered his congratulations: "Xiaowen, should the officials, intellectuals and PLA generals decide to form an orchestra, you could assume the role of the first cellist."

My friends were surprised at how I dared to play this unusual Western instrument in such an elite music hall.

I answered them with the words: "I grew up in the 'noble' city of Guiyang."

Ye Xiaowen,
Executive Vice President of
the Central Institute of Socialism
November 2012





Today an impressive memorial honoring Wang Yang-ming stands in the precise place of the philosopher's exile and eventual triumph. That land is no longer remote; no longer primitive. Today this is a progressive place known as Guiyang, The Philosopher City.

In the eighth year of Ming Dynasty Emperor Xianzong's rule, an 11-year-old boy was brought to Peking by his great-grandfather. During a banquet the venerable elder good-naturedly prodded the boy to conceive a poem for his guests. The boy quickly complied:

*Jinshan is a small point resembling a fist
Which breaks the watery bottom of Yangzhou.
After drinking I lean against the pavilion facing the moon
And listen to the tune of a jade flute
Which suggests a lullaby for a cave dragon.*

The great-grandfather and all others present were astounded. They asked the boy to conceive another, this time challenging him to compose based on a theme of human perspective. He thought and conceived:

*When the mountain is near and the moon at a great distance
You find that the moon is small.
You express this by saying: "The mountain is greater than the moon."
But if a man's eye were as vast as heaven
He would feel that the mountain is small and the moon is great.*



Introduction to the Yangming Cave.

*Honored Host –
At the Wang Yangming memorial, here
a granite bust of the much esteemed
philosopher, master military strategist and
man of peace.*





A year later the boy asked the family tutor: “What is a great accomplishment for a man?” The tutor replied, “To succeed in the state examinations through much practice of reading and writing.” Not satisfied, the boy replied “I disagree. A truly great accomplishment would be to become a sage.” When his father heard of this he laughed and exclaimed: “So, you have decided to become a sage?!” Indeed, the boy had decided and he did.

Wang Yangming lived from 1472 to 1529. In his lifetime he achieved a level of philosophical enlightenment and progressive teaching for which he remains internationally revered to this day. He also possessed a toughness of spirit and

Writer Note: Wang Yangming may have been one of China's first 'progressives'. He endured unjust exile to later rise in the ranks of government and assume command of a regional army. He was also something of a super sheriff, tasked with quelling an epidemic of banditry to the north. First he hammered the bandit forces, then he cut a deal with them. In return for the bandit armies ceasing their rampages, he educated the populace, including his former foes and their families. In the end, he proved himself to be a man of peace, goodwill and enlightenment. And he cared for the common man.

Left Behind - Above the Wang Yangming memorial, near the cave where the renowned philosopher would meditate and rest, Chiang Kai-shek had these words of Wang Yangming etched, meaning the unity of knowledge and action.

a leadership ability which saw him overcome years of unjust exile to rise in the ranks of government, lead armies and overcome rebellious bandit forces.

The exile came in 1507 when Wang, then a ranking official, refused to abide the misdeeds of the corrupt and powerful eunuch, Liu Jin. In return for his demonstrated principles and integrity, Wang was exiled to the remote hinterlands in what is today's Xiwen County, Guiyang. There he spent years meditating, gaining enlightenment and educating a growing number of disciples.

In 1510 the offending eunuch was finally exposed, confronted and put to death. Thus vindicated, Wang's exile was rescinded. Reinstated as an official, Wang was soon appointed governor of Jiangxi, a region long bedeviled by rebels and bandits. First Wang hammered at the miscreants with his armies, then he negotiated an agreement. Notable among his many accomplishments, as part of the progressive pact of peace Wang brought reforms, education and enterprise to the region, bettering the lives of the people – including those of his former foes.

Possibly China's first *progressive*, foremost in Wang's teachings as a philosopher and represented by his actions as a government official and military commander was a practical compassion for the common man and a reverence for nature. Today an impressive memorial honoring Wang Yangming stands in the precise place of the philosopher's exile and eventual triumph. That land is no longer remote; no longer primitive. Today this is a progressive place known as Guiyang, The Philosopher City.

*Honored Host –
At the Wang Yangming memorial, here
a granite statue of the much esteemed
philosopher, master military strategist and
man of peace; his disciples in attendance.*



*Masterly Writings –
A few of the revered writings of Wang
Yangming, at the Wang Yangming memorial.*



*Sanctuary –
On a hill above the Wang Yangming
memorial, the cave where the renowned
philosopher would meditate and rest during
his exile.*

The Capital of Calm



(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)



“The substance of the mind is revealed through its tranquility and its function through its activity.”

– Wang Yangming



*Guiyang was once a military outpost, but few conflicts occurred and canons like this saw little practical application.
(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)*

Unlike the multi-millennium capital of Beijing and other more militarily strategic cities which have been around for thousands of years, in the lush and fertile southwest the city of Guiyang happily missed out on the downside of being historically prime and much sought-after real estate. Avoided were the serial dramas of armed conflict, recurring destruction, royal machinations, homicidal emperors, volatile power struggles, threatening Mongol hordes and bloodthirsty greed-driven foreign intrusions. Among other more recent misfortunes missed, the region avoided the scourge of the Eight-Nation Alliance in the early 1900s and the brutality of Japanese aggression. During World War II, as part of the effort to beat back the invading Japanese from more easterly regions, Guiyang did serve Allied efforts as a logistical transit point. Guiyang senior citizens still recount the strange sight of US soldiers in the streets directing supply convoys, for instance. But the high drama that comes with epic conflict and major political upheaval mostly missed Guiyang. And that’s a good thing. Guiyang has long been known as a green and peaceful place; and it remains so today.

Today Guiyang is a vibrant and rapidly modernizing city in central Guizhou Province. And, although *newish* by Chinese standards, there is a rich history behind the current development. The Guiyang region was inhabited as long as 600,000 years ago by early peoples who possessed their own complex culture. It has remained inhabited ever since, although it took some time before those inhabitants were Chinese. Thousands of years later the area was home to a few frontier military outposts. The Sui Dynasty (581–618) did have a command center there and the Tang Dynasty (618–907) also had a prefecture in place. But not much happened. The Song Dynasty (960–1279) named it Guizhou,

*Basket -
Traditional handicraft painting at Du Village,
countryside of Guiyang.*



*Administrative Service Center of Guiyang.
(Photo by Li Ning)*

which was just a village of about 500 households. The city itself was not constructed until 1283, during the period of the Yuan Dynasty, although it went by a different name, Shunyuan (meaning to obey the Yuan, the Mongol rulers). This marked the beginning of the first settlers that we, today, would know as Chinese.

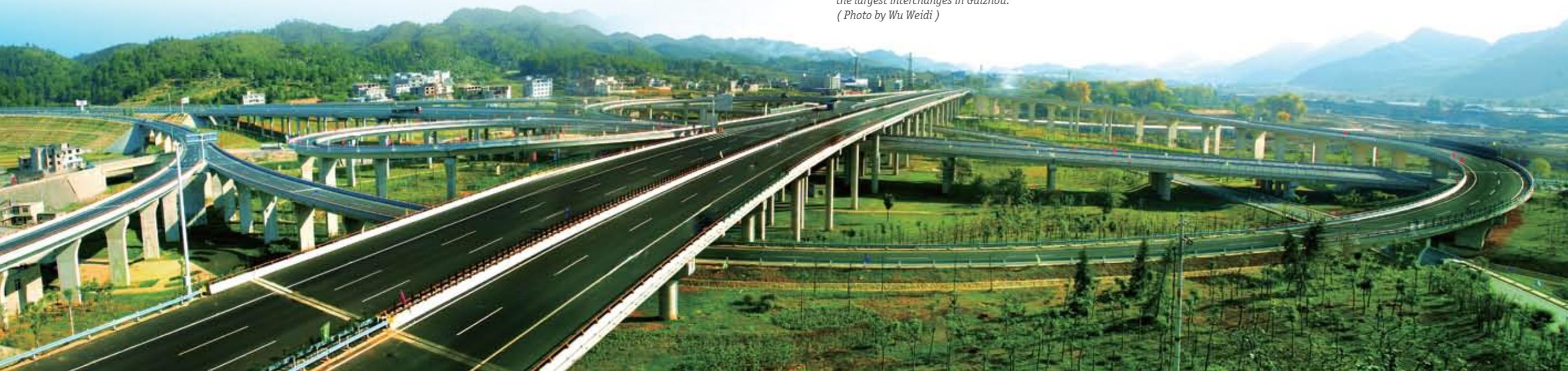
The area only coalesced into what could be called a permanent settlement around 400 years ago and under the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) it first became known as Guiyang, due to its location on the south side of the Gui Mountain.

Guiyang eventually became an important administrative and commercial center with a varied and unique culture. It consisted of two distinct communities, the Sichuanese, who lived in the “new” part of the city, located to the north,

and those from Hunan, Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, who lived in the “old” southern part. Until the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in the middle of the 20th century, Guiyang remained relatively undeveloped in terms of modern infrastructure. The war revealed the new strategic importance of this city and it began to be developed, resulting in vast progress in a limited period of time. Road transport was established linking Guiyang to Kunming in Yunnan Province and the wartime capital of Chongqing in Sichuan Province, as well as into Hunan.

Those road networks were not enough, however, and Guiyang soon developed its first of many rail networks, linking Liuzhou in Guangxi. This expansive rail network was completed in 1959, thus allowing easy transport from Guizhou to Chongqing to the north, Kunming to the west, and Changsha to the east. Guiyang has since become a major provincial city and a flourishing industrial base. Today it is the capital of Guizhou Province.

*Niulanguan Interchange, one of
the largest interchanges in Guizhou.
(Photo by Wu Weidi)*



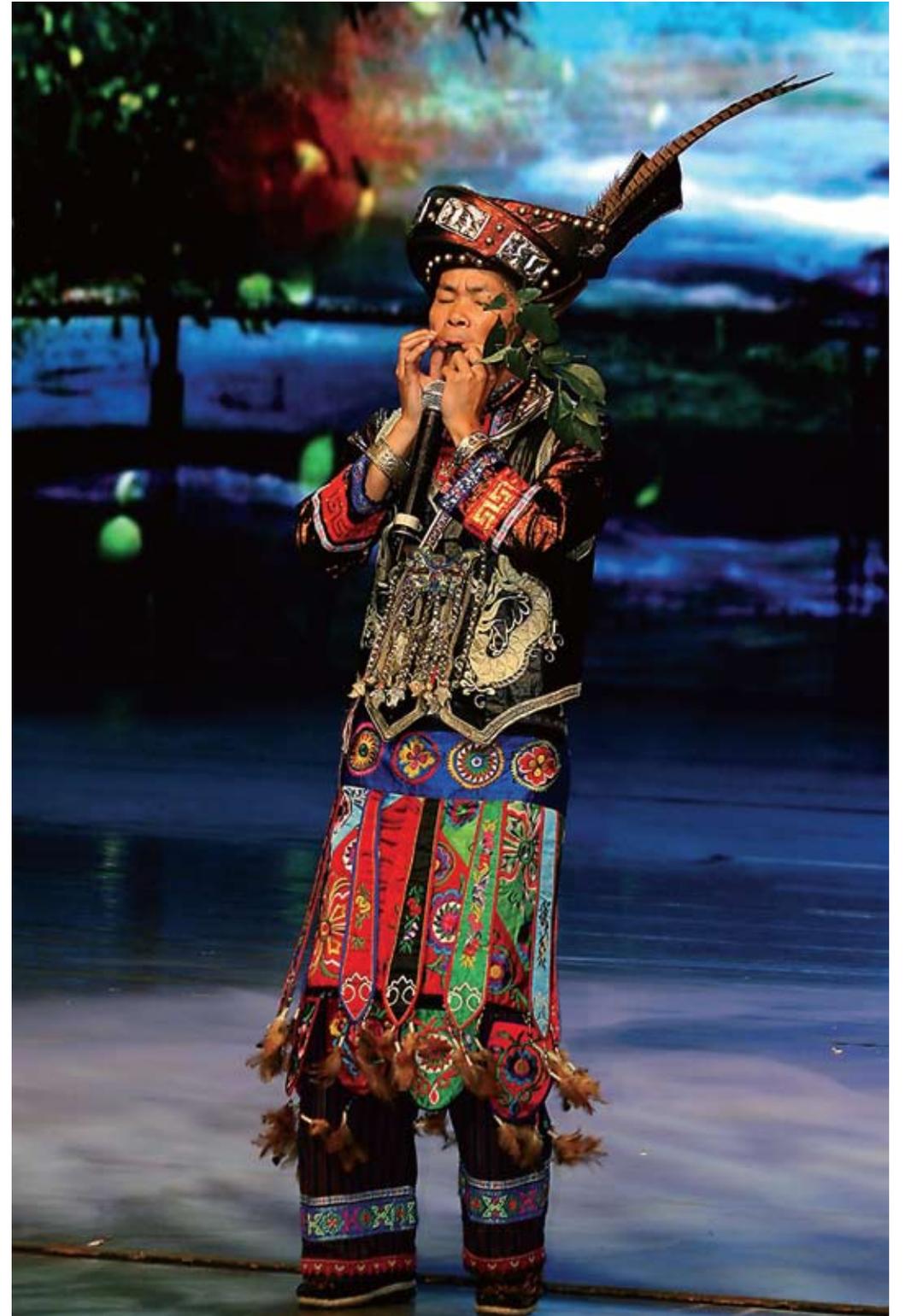
Iconic Peace

Cities in China often hold and cherish ancient beliefs – if not for factual consideration perhaps just as a matter of pride, tradition and inspiration. Guiyang, long home to diverse and colorful ethnic groups like the Miao and Bouyei, is no exception. Appropriately for Guiyang, unlike the fearsome dragon and phoenix worshiped by people in China’s Central Plains, the icons honored in Guizhou Province are less threatening, even friendly in character.

Traditionally, Guizhou people worshiped the dragon and the bird, the latter primarily represented by the phoenix. That’s not surprising. Many ethnic groups in Guizhou, such as the Miao, Dong and Bouyei all believe that birds represent a sort of divinity. In ancient times it was believed that the world is made of five elements: gold, wood, water, fire and soil, which are respectively white, green, black, red and yellow. The corresponding mainstream culture in Guizhou is a group of five phoenixes displaying these colors. The red phoenix guards southeast Guizhou and is in the shape of a pheasant; the yellow phoenix guards the northwest and is in the shape of an eagle; the green phoenix guards the southwest and is in the shape of a peacock; the black phoenix guards the south and is in the shape of a swallow; the white phoenix guards the middle-north and is in the shape of a swan.



*Cool Stuff -
At the Guiyang Grand Theater,
a performance of "Cool Guiyang," celebrating
ethnic cultures of peoples such as the Miao
and Bouyei.*



The Flavor of Qingyan

If you are seeking a single place which best represents not only the history of Guiyang, but also the hospitality of its people, its traditional culture and its remarkable cuisine, that would be Qingyan Ancient Town. Of the hundreds (perhaps thousands) of “ancient towns” scattered across the provinces and regions of China, Qingyan is distinctively special. For one, it actually is a walled and very old town complex. And there are many antique structures and shops well preserved in their original form and function. The goods sold here are generally of a better quality than most other such tourist draws, with some of the merchandise, particularly the fine handcrafted jewelry, at an elite quality of material and craftsmanship. And then there is the food. You could spend a day shop-hopping; sampling local snacks at the many small vendors, then sit down for a full meal with a side glass of locally brewed beer and perhaps a toast or two made with the famous Moutai liquor, distilled in the province in Moutai Town.

And the place is relaxing. If you intend to visit Qingyan, be prepared to slow down your step, browse, have a seat on a garden bench, perhaps meditate on a shop’s antique storefront or a temple’s ornate architecture, then stroll along the scenic and quaint winding narrow alleys. Qingyan is a modern day gem of a reminder of times past, and it has a history.



*Goods sold in Qingyan Ancient Town.
(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)*

*Be prepared to slow down in Qingyan Ancient Town.
(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)*



Secret rice, Qingyan Ancient Town.





North gate to Qingyan Ancient Town. (Photo by Xiao Yuwen)



*Afternoon Shadows -
A quiet place for tea, Qingyan Ancient Town.*



Qingyan Ancient Town.

Qingyan is a modern gem of a reminder of times past. (Photo by Xiao Yuwen)

Located in southern Guiyang near the constant flow of Yudai River, by virtue of its strategic location Qingyan was originally built as a manor for a local commander in 1373 during the Ming Dynasty. The strategic goal was to have better control of the postal roads connecting Sichuan, Yunnan, Hunan and Guangxi provinces. In ancient China, these postal roads played a crucial role, not only to facilitate transportation, but also as military installations to relay the transport of supplies, as well as for transmitting military orders and intelligence. Qingyan was conceived for this strategic purpose, but it would become a municipality unto itself.

Along the postal roads a system called *Pu* was established to enable the transfer of official documents and a system called *Tang* was employed for transmitting military intelligence. Almost at the same time, to institutionalize the practice of land reclamation and crop-farming by troops stationed in the region, a system called *Jun Tun* was established at the foot of Lions Peak. The word *Jun* translates to mean troops and *Tun* is Chinese for small village.

It was about this time that Qingyan Tun, or Qingyan Village, first made history. In 1381, Zhu Yuanzhang, then emperor of the Ming Dynasty, sent 300,000 soldiers to seize Yunnan and Guizhou. After discovering the amiable setting of Qingyan Village many of the soldiers chose to settle there and gradually it became a prosperous town where active and retired troops peacefully coexisted with the civilian residents.



After its founding the town gradually transformed. Its mud walls were replaced with stone and stone was also used to pave the town's lanes and streets. The city walls were particularly magnificent, built on cliffs using megalithic pieces of rock and respectively facing east, west, south and north. This was a town built along the mountains. Qingyan's affinity with the mountains is even expressed within its name: *Qing* is a dark-green color describing a pigment used by women in ancient times to color their eyebrows and *Yan* means rock.

One important advantage of constructing a town along a hillside was the abundance of a variety of different types of rock in varying sizes for use in building. Aside from the city walls and streets, the bridge, houses, sculptures, rollers and even the water vats are all made of stone.

The sturdy city walls and gate towers reflect Qingyan's history as a military outpost, but the town was long known as a peaceful place and soldiers came to settle as townspeople. (Photo by Xiao Yuwen)



Mansion of the Number One Scholar.

Qingyan is a compact town, spanning about three square kilometers, but, remarkably, almost one hundred sites of cultural and historical relics from the Ming and Qing dynasties are scattered both inside and outside the town walls. These great walls divide Qingyan into its inner and outer towns. Outside the walls, history passes by under the monumental gateways of virtue and longevity. Just three out of the eight original gateways remain today. As a typical Chinese cultural symbol, these monumental gateways, guarded by stone drums or lions, all face from south to north, with a height of 9.5 meters and a width of 9 meters. The monumental gateway of virtue to local man Zhou Chaozhong's wife and daughter-in-law, built in 1869 during the Qing Dynasty, propagates the traditional virtue that a woman must remain devoted to her husband throughout her whole life. Although in ancient history the monument was revered for its virtue and many girls passed beneath. For modern visitors, it is the monuments' delicate sculptures and magnificent stature that win them their praise.

The Mansion of the Number One Scholar is the former residence of Zhao Yijiong, Guizhou's first Number One Scholar (in the imperial examinations). Inside this remarkable wooden structure, signs of calligraphy can be found in many places: evidence of its inhabitant's prestigious cultural background after so many years.



Forever Royal - Mansion of the Number One Scholar.



History and modernity meld in the old alley. (Photo by Xiao Yuwen)



Wenchang Pavilion. (Photo by Wu Weidi)

Another fascinating structure, Wenchang Pavilion, was built during the Wanli Era (1573–1620) of the Ming Dynasty and then repaired during the Qianlong Era (1736–1796) of the Qing Dynasty. Its namesake, Wenchang, is the god of the fate of scholars. So, in ancient times scholars would often come to this pavilion to study, as well as to communicate with and worship Wenchang.

Yingxiang Temple, one of the most famous temples in Guiyang, enjoys the reputation as being the ancestor of all the temples in Guizhou. Even today, many people still come here to pay their respect to Buddha.

The Ciyun Temple has managed to maintain its shape and structure, meaning that many of its delicately carved stone pillars are worth visiting and studying. The wooden sculptures in Shoufo Temple are also masterpieces by ancient artisans.

Although traditional culture played a very important role in Qingyan, other influences gradually entered this town via the postal roads and began to exert their influences on its people. It is rare, in one town, to find that people following four different religious faiths are able to live peacefully, but Qingyan's

Yin-Yang Perspective – Qingyan Ancient Town.



residents manage it with ease. The most influential religion here is Taoism. Taoists worship Nature, with beliefs such as “Nature lives with me in symbiosis and everything is with me as a whole.” It is a religion that encourages people to live harmoniously with Nature. Buddhism is also very popular in Qingyan. Buddhist beliefs correlate with the spirit of Confucianism in many respects, so it is widely accepted by the public. As well as these two major religions, Catholicism and Christianity also have their followers in Qingyan. All have the opportunity to find their own inner calm here and to have a better understanding of how important it is to live at peace with Nature.



(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)



*Color and Craft –
Intricate painted wood carving, Qingyan
Ancient Town.*

Qingyan is also home to distinctive and unusual folk houses. Trunk-shaped wood-carvings appear on the square columns in front of houses. In ancient China buildings were built with a system of brackets inserted between the top of a column and a crossbeam; nails were rarely used. These square columns are used to support the overhanging eaves. And so the trunk shape reflects power.

In China many architectural patterns originate from Nature and are symbols of people's good wishes. This can also be seen in Qingyan. At a glance the exterior decorations are not overly decadent or luxurious. This is because Qingyan's people, especially its businesspeople, adhere to the traditional idea that "Opportunity makes the thief," and never display their wealth through opulent outside decorations. But by looking closer at these decorations, their cultural connotations will become clear and their meaning will impress like an ancient book. Every carving has a meaning. For example, a pomegranate, calabash, or sunflower appearing on foyer's decorative cylinder means "the more sons,



*Boutique Bootery –
Handmade ethnic-influenced footwear in
Qingyan Ancient Town.*

the more blessings." In addition, many carvings depict the four gods who are respectively in charge of fortune, emolument, longevity and happiness; the four traditional jobs, farming, studying, fishing and woodcutting; and animals such as dragons, phoenixes, lions and elephants are also often seen in the window decorations. On any window you study, it is possible to see many cracked ice patterns. This evidences the fact that only by years of hard and persistent work can a man become successful in his official career.

Another unique characteristic of the folk house is the double eaves, representing an interesting combination of human biology and commercial operation. During the wet season, to keep the businesses running, smart businessmen invented this typical Qingyan folk house based on years of experiments and experience. If a folk house is also used as a shop, its front door is usually larger than a building that is only used as a home. To prevent rain and wind from blowing through the door and affecting the business, it is necessary to employ double eaves. Like human eyebrows and eyelashes protecting the eye from dust and water, the second layer of the eaves plays an especially important role, covering the doorway and protecting the building – like the eyelash of the house.



*Battlement Past –
Gate to Qingyan Ancient Town.*

Qingyan not only accommodates a number of different religious groups, many ethnic groups also coexist here, including the Han, Miao and Bouyei. Many activities are held throughout the year to celebrate the different festivals of these varied cultures. During the first month of the lunar year, the dragon dance, lantern dance and field dance of Miao people, as well as the Avalokitesvara fair, are big events. Another exciting event is the setting-off of the “Baoding,” an event that also attracts many visitors each year. A Baoding is a type of large firework, 6.5 feet in height and 3.3 feet in diameter. Each Baoding is installed with different fireworks and decorated with illustrations of many traditional stories. Once lit, the light of the fireworks illuminates the stories that describe the history and culture of Qingyan. The fireworks also appear in many different shapes: some are strings of silver lights, while some look like fire dragons. The final fireworks, containing banners bearing wishes such as “May you have a golden harvest!” and “May the country be prosperous and the people at peace!” will explode, showing people’s wish for a better life.

After setting off the Baoding, the Kongming Lantern is released. The Kongming Lantern is the ancestor of a modern fire balloon. In Qingyan, people tie oil-soaked paper to the cross-wire frame at the bottom of the lantern and light it using straws. The hot air rises and the lantern flies high and far into the sky.

Like in many other older towns in China, the most important industry here is agriculture, with forestry also occupying an important position in people’s incomes. Township enterprises are mainly involved in phosphorus chemistry and selling building materials and health-care products. In recent years, thanks to its special location and abundant historical resources, tourism has become another important source of income. Township enterprises and tourism complement each other, thus expand the economy and insure the continuation of the ancient town of Qingyan.

*Browsing -
Walking clientele of Qingyan Ancient Town.*

Writer Note: I have been to “ancient towns” and “old towns” across China. So many I could not begin to count - literally. Some are okay, some are not. Qingyan is better than ‘okay’. In fact, it was great. Relaxing, scenic, no-hassle vendors, merchandise ranging from good to fine quality and the food...

It was in Qingyan Ancient Town that Guiyang (Guizhou) officially surpassed Sichuan as my most favorite of Chinese cuisine. But you have to like spice. If you truly appreciate savory and spicy food, prepared dishes allowing you to taste and savor the fine quality and often complex blending of fresh vegetables, meats, sauces and seasonings, get gone to Guiyang.



*Reverie and Retail -
Shopping at a slow pace, Qingyan Ancient Town.*



*View from a Wall -
Looking out from Qingyan Ancient Town.*



Sage Green



“Nature is the original character of the mind. Heaven is the source of Nature.”

– Wang Yangming

It runs in broad belts wrapping throughout and around the city; it blankets urban tracts in the parklands; it seems to go on forever beyond the city across vast plains and rolling mountains. It is the lush and refreshing green of trees, gardens, forests and croplands. Plentiful in rainfall and moderate in climate, Guiyang and greater Guizhou Province is indeed a green and clean place. And city managers aim to make it more so.

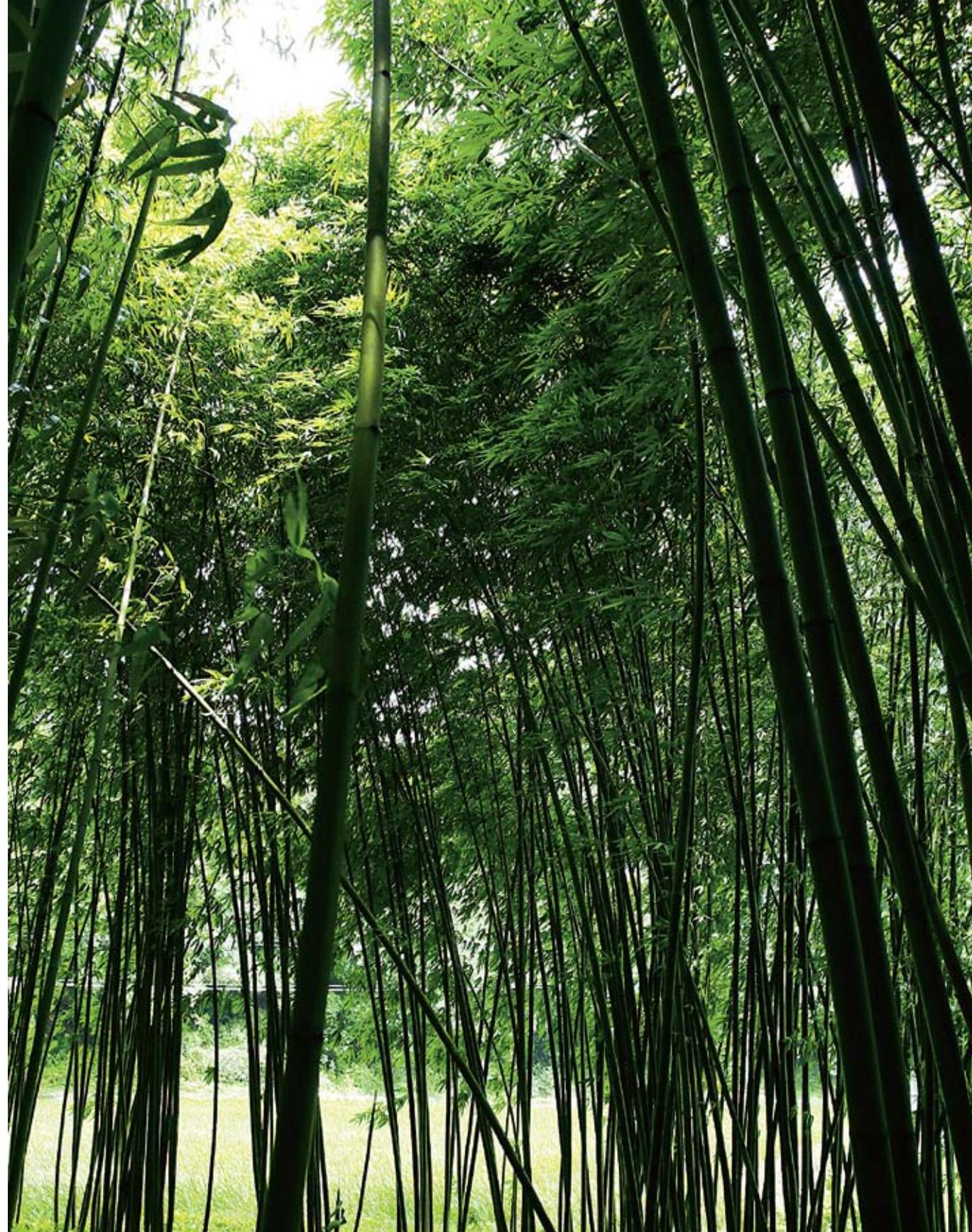
An environmentally progressive city, to benefit peoples’ day-to-day lives and protect the environment for future generations, in recent years Guiyang’s government has enacted several measures to protect green growth, water and air quality.



Tianhe Lake. (Photo by CFP)

*Silent Setting –
Near Gaopo Township, Guiyang high country.*

*Bamboo Peace –
Bamboo is abundant and lush in and around
Guiyang.*





A Cool Place

Tucked within a vast, green and fertile region, it is not difficult to imagine why the land now known as Guiyang came to be settled. And, like a lot of things in China, by way of explanation there is a saying: "Up above is heaven, down below are Suzhou and Hangzhou, while Guiyang sits in the happy middle place."

It is generally accepted that the most agreeable living environment for humans is at a geographic location enjoying an annual rainfall of 80 to 120 centimeters. Guiyang receives an ideal 1,000 mm of rain each year. Further: The city region benefits from relatively low levels of UV radiation with an average temperature of 15.3°C. In summer, it reaches a pleasant average of 23.2°C. Even the hottest days only range between 25 and 28 degrees. Compared with other cities, summer in Guiyang is cool and agreeable. Guiyang is only 500 kilometers from the eastern coast of China, on the boundary of a continental and a marine climate – another reason why it's not too cold in the winter or too hot in the summer. The air is fresh all year round. The average altitude in Guiyang is about 1,000 meters above sea level. There are not only many mountains and water sources inside the city, such as Huaxi National Wetland Park, Taoyuan River, Maple Lake and Aha Reservoir, but also many surrounding it. These natural features provide a sort of natural air-conditioning, with healthy levels of rain and a generally agreeable climate.

Strolling with Grandfather – A quiet walk along Guanshan Park Lake. Note the wind and solar-powered streetlights to the left.

A City Green – Road beautification is a big part of Guiyang's long-term city planning. Sign: "Welcome to Cool Guiyang."

The Way is Clear – Guiyang's roads are increasingly modern and green – with trees and flowers alongside.

Tranquil Traverse – Crossing the Huaxi River, Huaxi National Wetland Park.

Writer Note: In the United States such a city-provided stone traverse would likely not be allowed. City officials would be too worried about clumsy citizens, falls to the river and resulting lawsuits.

Pastel Tranquil – Huaxi National Wetland Park.

Water and Mountain – A branch of the Huaxi River, Huaxi National Wetland Park.

Countryside of Guiyang in spring. (Photo by CFP)

Hongfu Temple, Qianling Park. (Photo by CFP)



*Vantage View -
View from atop Qianling Mountain, Qianling
Park, near the center of Guiyang.
(Photo by Liu Xiaodong)*



Air

Before the year 2000 acid rain was a serious problem in Guiyang. The impact was damaging to buildings, the environment and people's health. The main cause of acid rain in Guiyang was the burning of coal, particularly for heavy industry. The coal mined in the Guiyang region was particularly damaging due to its higher level of sulfur. If the air was to be clean, this had to be remedied.

In 2000 the Guiyang government outlawed coal-fired boilers within the downtown area. This resulted in the scrapping of approximately 1,200 boilers exceeding more than 600 tons. Within three years after the implementation of this policy, the air quality in Guiyang had greatly improved. Acid rain occurred far less frequently than before and, especially after 2005, it rarely occurred at all.

Even after the near elimination of acid rain in Guiyang, additional heavy industries were relocated outside of the city. The more substantial and significant of those relocations included a steel factory, a cement factory and a power plant. Other industries have also been affected. Today, in general, industries with a high level of energy consumption and high pollution are forbidden from operating in and around Guiyang. One notable example was the banning of industries involving molybdenum ore. Those that could not be easily relocated adopted new production technology and environmentally friendly measures to reduce pollution.

Water

Just as the Guiyang government is determined to keep the air clean, so it is determined to do the same for Guiyang's water, particularly the Huaxi River, which has not always been well protected. Today, reservoirs are strictly protected. Guiyang receives a large amount of rainfall each year, but due to the karst formations that dot the landscape Guiyang has a lack of large, suitable reservoirs in which to store all this rain and does not have large underground storage reservoirs. Those reservoirs and lakes that Guiyang does have are closely monitored and well protected to keep the city's drinking water clean and safe.



*Ecological -
A hybrid vehicle exits the green and serene
Guanshan Park.*

*Intelligent Installation -
Solar/wind-powered streetlight installation
underway at Guanshan Park. Renewable
clean energy is integral to Guiyang's long-
term city planning.*



*Dog Dip -
A canine takes a swim at Huaxi National
Wetland Park.*

*View to a Mill -
At the Huaxi National Wetland Park.*



Guiyang is able to use this clean water to help other provinces. As Guiyang is an upstream region for both the Pearl River and the Yangtze River, water in Guiyang is rarely influenced or polluted by other less environmentally friendly regions upstream. This is of benefit both to Guiyang and to others, as Guiyang's clean water flows downstream to benefit other provinces.

Already an environmentally friendly region, and expected to remain so in the future, the government and people continue to improve and expand careful measures for the environment. Not surprisingly, water is a major area of focus. Guiyang relies on three primary sources of water and the city intends to make sure that water stays clean. Hongfeng (Maple) Lake, Baihua Lake and Aha Reservoir are known, colloquially, among residents, as the city's three water jars. Together they contain an astounding 900 million cubic meters of water and are the source of much of Guiyang's drinking water.

Understanding the importance of keeping these water sources clean and safe for Guiyang's residents, the administrative bureau of two lakes and one reservoir was set up to maintain central organization of the water in these three sources. Furthermore, China's first environmental protection court was initiated in Guiyang, enabling legal matters regarding corporate pollution issues to be addressed easily. They also set up an environmental protection fund for the waters in 2007; over a three-year period, this fund raised an impressive 46.5 million yuan.

These environmental measures have shown some impressive results. Drinking water is safer for people in Guiyang and local residents can rest assured of high levels of water-based safety.



*To Fish in Quiet -
Fishermen relax, wait in peace and perhaps
meditate along the tranquil Huaxi River,
Huaxi National Wetland Park.*



Changpoling Forest Park, Guanshanhu District. (Photo by CFP)

Forests

Guiyang spans 8,034 square kilometers and much of this land mass is covered by forests. Today forestland makes up 3,340 square kilometers of Guiyang, accounting for 42.3 percent of its total coverage. It has long been a priority of Guiyang to maintain these beautiful forests and there are figures to prove it. On average, forestland in Guiyang has been growing at a rate of one percent every year for the past 20 years. In 1985 coverage was only 20.83 percent; by 2009 it had expanded to 40 percent.

Since the 1950s forestry in Guiyang has been conducted under a policy of encouraging the participation of the public with government grants. This process has been carried out under a program of reforestation along the Yangtze River, the protection of natural forests, a program of grain for green (namely returning farmland to forests or grassland to reduce soil erosion) and many more policies designed to maintain the forests throughout the province. All

these policies have made Guiyang a much more green and pleasant environment in which to live. And a greenbelt has been established in and around the city, ensuring that no further development diminishes these natural forests. This large amount of woodland allows for a burgeoning timber industry. Timber storage in Guiyang has reached 12.55 million cubic meters, or 44.9 cubic meters per hectare. Although this figure is far behind that of cities in developed countries, Guiyang is making steady progress. Through years of effort much progress has been made in this mode of ecological construction. This use of sustainable woodland has greatly improved the environment, also mitigating the issues of water loss and soil erosion. Guiyang's efforts have been recognized at the national level with the awarding of the titles of National Forest City and National Garden City.

The greatest challenge facing Guiyang today is that the city is located in an area with many karst landforms. Karst rock presents the problem that the layer of soil on top of the rock is very thin: the thinnest layer may be thinner than 10 centimeters and even the thickest layer is only about 40 centimeters. This is not beneficial for planting trees. There are many hills and mountains and the soil is in a thin layer and has low fertility. This means that plants are easily destroyed. What is worse is that once these plants are destroyed the low-grade soil makes it difficult for these plants to recover. A further problem is that the quality of the forest in Guiyang is not high; coniferous forests, particularly pines, take up a large proportion of forest, making the forest system unstable. Unfortunately, this means that the city has a long way to go to prevent forest fire and ward off pests.

Guiyang managers are well aware of these issues and are working to mitigate the threat of such risks. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011–2015), the government intends to greatly accelerate afforestation efforts. Their goal is to raise Guiyang's forest coverage to 45 percent by the end of 2015.

Mountain Monkeys - On Qianling Mountain in Qianling Park, near the center of Guiyang, a macaque mother and child not causing trouble, for now.

Writer Note: Like macaques I have encountered all over Asia, the Qianling Mountain tribe maintains the well-deserved reputation as troublemakers. Not long ago the city had to take action when confrontations between the food-focused simians and visiting humans escalated to an unacceptable level. Said action was humanitarian, however. A number of the desperados were captured and relocated to less public territory.

(Photo at right by CFP)





Baigong: The Eco-Village

A short drive from Guiyang, via the expressway and a few country roads, is the district of Huaxi and the village of Baigong. Although the residents of this village are of Han descent, Baigong's architecture features prominent ethnic characteristics. Walls are whitewashed and house roofs are made of gray tiles. Colorful bunches of drying peppers hang by red window lattices. The overall effect is colorful, clean and prosperous: A storybook village. But there is more to this tranquil setting.

Despite its rustic, idyllic appearance, everything in Baigong has not always been so easygoing. About 20 years ago life was much more difficult. The karst landforms that form the majority of the landscape here had long hindered Baigong's economy and development, meaning that before 1993 the village's cultivated land area per capita was less than 0.2 hectare. The barren farmland could not meet a villager's minimum basic needs for food and clothing. Now, after years of hard work and creativity, the village landscape has been transformed into fertile terraced fields surrounding simple stone and wooden structures. Towering, ancient trees, rocky roads and the homes of the villa-

*Parchment in Stone -
Historical writing along the walkways of
Baigong Village.*

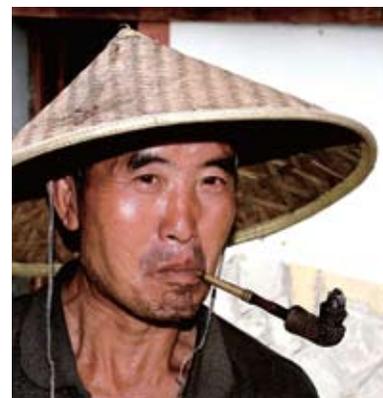


*Eco-Village -
Solar-powered streetlight in Baigong Village,
a self-sustaining 'eco-village' in the Guiyang
countryside. Crops, water and power are
naturally produced within the village.*

*A Pipe to Puff -
A friendly resident of Baigong Village shows
off his pipe-smoking character.*

*The Chief -
The village chief of Baigong, Huang Peihai.
He seems to do well for his village and his wife
is a terrific cook.*

*In the Fields -
Grandmother and grandson of Baigong
Village.*



gers present a scene of simplicity and quaint charm. To complete this idyllic picture, Baigong is heavily self-sufficient. Each household in the village grows several types of vegetables and fruits near their home, meaning that villagers are guaranteed wholesome, healthy food grown just steps from their doorways.

The name, Baigong, translates as roughly, "offering tribute and serving important guests." More recently, the village adopted a somewhat lengthier slogan: "Serving honored guests among idyllic scenery as a member of the 'One Thousand Village Program for Solar-powered LED Illumination.'"

On August 22, 2009, Tony Blair and Chinese martial arts star Jet Li's One Foundation kicked off their "One Thousand Village Program for Solar-powered LED Illumination." This program, underwritten by The Climate Group (TCG), aimed to bring power to many remote villages not yet connected to the national and regional power grids. The aim was to provide villages with green power using solar-powered LEDs as an alternative to conventional polluting sources of power. For these villages, solar power provides a brighter environment while limiting greenhouse emissions. Baigong was chosen to become the model village for the initiative.

The Climate Group and the One Foundation are actively promoting the program throughout China. At the same time, they have launched another initiative, named "Cities and Villages Move to Low Carbon." The goal is to focus on reducing the emission of greenhouse gases while promoting innovation in clean technologies. The "One Thousand Village Program" aims to expand throughout the vast rural areas of China and is projected to run for five years.

The results are substantial. In the first two years, the initiative was introduced to 400 Chinese villages. By installing solar lighting in these villages, the emission of carbon dioxide was reduced by more than 1.3 million tons. During the start-up phase, the program was primarily funded by the One Foundation.





*Bird's-eye Dragon –
From a mountain perspective, dragon design
in the crops.*

*Writer Note: I'm not sure how they did this,
but they did it well.*

It is expected that after sufficient levels of promotion a system of beneficial cyclic development will be realized with the support of local government and financial institution investment. Over the next three years it is expected that an additional 600 more villages in China, India and some African countries will be initiated into the program.

Baigong is already benefiting. It was selected to be the first village for the project at the first occasion of the Guiyang Meeting on Ecological Civilization. This meeting is co-sponsored by the Population Resources Environment Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Peking University, Guiyang Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and the People's Government of Guiyang. Subsequently, the village's ecological environment has enjoyed remarkable improvement and can expect greater sustainability. Increasingly greater numbers of visitors drop by to tour the village and dine on the local fresh foods. Baigong's annual per-capita income has increased from 3,270 yuan in 2008 to 6,500 yuan in 2010.

Writer Note: Baigong is a tidy and efficient little place. Even the gas for cooking is derived from naturally-producing methane chambers in the ground. You get the impression that if the rest of the world went away, Baigong would do just fine.



On December 6, 2011, a high-level meeting designated as "Momentum for Change" was held as a part of the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Durban, South Africa. In the course of proceedings, Baigong, as part of the "One Thousand Village Program," was selected as one of the top 10 worldwide example of public private partnership. The city government of Guiyang and the nonprofit organizations The Climate Group and the One Foundation are running a successful joint partnership for green development, aiming to reduce the consumption of energy and resources, mitigate the impact of climate change on rural areas and improve local people's quality of life.

In the process of building an eco-friendly city, Guiyang has remained firmly committed to social and economical development and the advanced concept of ecological civilization. Baigong is representative of this municipal developmental effort.

Some residents are now innkeepers and others devote some of their land to the "Happy Farm," a program whereby city dwellers can visit, cultivate and harvest their own produce. Since 2009, village income has thus steadily increased while green agriculture expanded.

Far from UN meetings, British prime ministers and martial artists, in the quiet of a Baigong night 35 solar-powered LED streetlights illuminate this quaint and scenic village. In addition, more than 260 households now live in safe homes relying on organic methane-power-generating tanks. By the end of 2011, the "One Thousand Village Program" was underway in 15 villages in Guiyang and 157 solar-powered LED streetlights were lighting up village streets.





(Photo by CFP)

“The sages do not consider that making no mistakes is a blessing. They believe, rather, that the great virtue of man lies in his ability to correct his mistakes and continually make a new man of himself.”

– Wang Yangming

For thousands of years, longer than any other nation on Earth, China as a nation has remained enthralled with art and the written word. Paintings, sculptures, carvings, metalwork, jade, poetry, plays, novels, and the graceful artistic form of the written word itself, calligraphy, are only a few of the forms for which the nation is revered. But only in recent years has a new sort of art blossomed and matured. And so cities like Beijing and Shanghai have dedicated whole districts to the artists of the avant-garde. Guiyang, too, is home to some of the younger and more dynamic of China’s modern artists, as well as to more venerable creative individuals, long a part of the cultural landscape of Guiyang and China.



*Workspace –
An artist's studio at the Urban Parts Art Studio.*



*Urban Artists –
Artists of the Urban Parts Art Studio, Guiyang.*

Partial image of an Urban Parts artist's work.



Urban Parts

Guiyang, like other increasingly cosmopolitan cities in China, has, in a way, been parceled into differing cultural districts and communities. And so the significance of an art studio exceeds the function of a simple concrete space. The studio as a place and concept expresses the spiritual drive of an artist and their art. Preeminent in this concept in Guiyang, lead by Dong Zhong – a well-known painter in the region and in China’s art circles – more than 20 artists have gathered together at the Urban Parts Art Studio. Working together in a communal fashion, the artists focus on creating, while drawing inspiration and support from other members of their group.

Established in 2006, the Urban Parts Art Studio is today a base for local artists, working collectively and individually. The Studio was conceived with the intended mission of better binding the artists to the city while they express their point of view on the urban environment, Nature, and humanity in the modern world.

Unlike, for instance, an artists’ loft, the Urban Parts Art Studio may be better defined as a workspace for artists seeking a relatively private, stable, and secure embryonic chamber, of sorts. The concept seems to be working. The artists of Urban Parts are gaining exposure and a positive reception, invited to exhibit throughout China.

Artists Profiled

DONG Zhong, Artist, Founder of Urban Parts Art Studio

Dong Zhong, founder of Urban Parts Art Studio and vice chair of Guiyang Artists Association, was born in the city in 1969. Subsequent to the completion of his work in mural painting at the Chinese Central Academy of Arts, in 2006 he founded the Urban Parts Art Studio.

In considering Dong Zhong’s paintings, some of which feature birds with two heads, monstrous fish, wild-eyed hyenas and other fantastically-rendered creatures (not to mention pink plum-blossoms), you can see he has a different way of looking at things. The dreamy colors, expressionistic forms, and intriguing symbols make tangible a fantastical imagination and a distinctly unique artistic language.

In the words of Dong Zhong:

“From my point of view, art is a question of taste. An individual’s taste is a feeling and an instinct. It is natural that you respond to the reality in my paintings, because we live in a reality, and honestly I am kind of tired of this materialized world.

Urban Parts artists and their works.



*Zhang Ruoyun –
A modern artist creating at the Urban Parts
Art Studio, Guiyang.*

*Dong Zhong –
The artist and founder of Urban Parts Art
Studio stands by his work.*

Spatial value, in terms of an Eastern context, because it is non-scientific, requires more imagination. You must experience the art yourself and this physical experience will lead you to realize the content of the space.”

As to the place of his birth, art, and business, Dong has a particular viewpoint: “Since the 1970s we have defined the characteristic of Guiyang’s artists as being those that remain in their personal sphere. They have never followed fashion and mainstream fads, but pay attention to their inner world. In Guiyang, there are very few artists, but those that exist have many unique characteristics. In my view, Guiyang city cultivates artists with uniqueness, not those who are widely recognized by the mainstream. They also are not fearful of taking any risk for their work.

Art is a passion, but it is undeniably also a labor and an effort. In terms of artistic inspiration, it always comes from years of hard work. It is certain that artists have the intelligence, while their so-called inspiration and drive come from their parents. An artist’s family, moreover, is responsible for instilling the necessary attitude towards art and the persistence to continue when others would not.”

Venerable and Venerated

Chinese, both old and young, appreciate and honor traditional arts and the art of the written word. They also honor the practitioners of such, like the two dedicated gentlemen, profiled below, who have persevered and endured for their creative passion.

DAI Mingxian, Calligrapher/Collector

Following in the footsteps of his father who practiced calligraphy each morning, Dai Mingxian started down the path to his literary destiny at a young age, beginning the practice of calligraphy while still a child. This interest branched out in middle school, when he turned his focus to literature, a field that has occupied him ever since. In 1956, he began to write poetry, and in 1962 he published his first novel. By the end of 1965, however, his brief literary flourish was cut short during the “cultural revolution.” He gave up on literature and became a teacher in a rural high school.

Dai’s creative passions were unabated and he again began to practice calligraphy in his spare time. A visit to China by then Japanese President Kakuei Tanaka brought a renewed surge in the popularity of calligraphy. It was not long before Dai Mingxian began to gain notoriety for his skill in this art and he began to receive novice calligraphers and scholars studying the works of the famed philosopher, Wang Yangming. As the years passed and China advanced and opened up, Dai expanded his fields of work and study, writing more and conceiving dramatic scripts for plays and television.



The Maker in the Window - Intricate handicraft and the artist in frame, Qingyan Ancient Town.



Scholar in Place - Calligrapher and collector Dai Mingxian in an enlightened space, the home and studio he shares with his wife.



Contemplation - Writer He Guangyu during a quiet moment.

Aside from literature and calligraphy, Dai’s other passions include collecting rare stones, the horticultural art of bonsai, Chinese traditional drama such as Sichuan opera and Kunqu opera, Western classical music like Mozart and Tchaikovsky, ethnic classical music, and myriad other scholarly and creative pursuits.

Dai’s achievements and posts are many: He is former president of Guizhou Calligraphers Association, vice president of Guizhou Writers Association, and vice president of the Guiyang Federation of Literary and Art Circles. He has written widely, including novels, drama, poems, prose, TV scripts, children’s literature, and much more.

Dai says that calligraphy should be a process of combining skill, artistic innovation, and something he calls, “the way.” In expressing his perspective on what we commonly refer to as “skill,” he emphasized the fundamentals, attributing the attainment of skill to both training and the artist’s artistic method. By artistic innovation, he implies the expression of the artist’s personality and uniqueness. Finally, he explains “the way” as the orientation of the artist’s spirit and their pursuit of poetry; Dai regards this as the highest standard and ultimate aim of aesthetics.

Dai Mingxian projects a humble, down-to-earth demeanor. In his opinion, each person should gain their value from life in doing what they are both interested in and good at, and thus gain happiness in the process regardless of financial success. He also feels that the modernization of Guiyang is an undeniably positive development, noting that both the government and public are focusing on environmental protection as a priority, and, according to Dai, this will hold the city in a good position for future generations.

HE Guangyu, Author/Writer

He Guangyu is a prolific and dynamic author who has long maintained a strong local focus in his work while also looking abroad for additional insight and inspiration. In 2005 he wrote *Guizhou: A Province of Immigrants*, to be included as part of a Foreign Languages Press collection with the master label, *Panoramic China*. In that writing He focused on the flow of migration into the province and the subsequent harmonious coexistence of the various ethnic groups. He also touched upon the topic of preserving traditional ethnic cultures as well as the impact of modernization on Guizhou’s environment.

After a successful career spanning decades, He recently retired from the Guizhou Federation of Literary and Art Circles. According to He, culture and art in Guizhou is rapidly changing due to the effects of global communication and modern, more comfortable lifestyles. Many young people identify strongly with Western culture, leaving their understanding of Chinese traditional culture lacking, especially in comparison to older generations. To keep traditional culture alive, it is, therefore, important for there to be intergenerational dialogue.

It is not only the youth who have been affected by foreign culture, writers of He's generation were influenced by European and former Soviet Union cultures, as well as the global embrace of American culture during the 21st century. This is not necessarily a bad thing, He explains. He himself was deeply influenced by the classic American literature of Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, and Mark Twain. He admired the spirit of their work and after the "cultural revolution" came to a close he wrote a novel entitled *Wake Up*, based on his thinking and experience of the time. He says that to some extent he drew inspiration from Hemingway's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*.

In referencing certain guiding principles of life, He quotes one of China's top scholars, Fei Xiaotong, who said, "Every form of beauty has its uniqueness, preciousness is to appreciate other forms of beauty with openness. If beauty represents itself with diversity and integrity, the world will be blessed with harmony and unity." This expresses, according to He, that drawing on our experiences, both local and international, is important in learning how to respect and understand international cultures.

Guangyu says he has gained much while traveling abroad, all the while recording his feelings, his perceptions and his personal experiences. His works are not only the outcome of academic research; they are unique cultural explorations. He profoundly believes that there must be those living in this modern city who must explore and record the city and its culture, so that history can be preserved. Strongly interested in history, He Guangyu believes that people gain more by reflecting on the past while working on the present. He also stresses that local culture and history deserve more attention and study due to their significance in expressing the city's uniqueness. Ten years ago, He Guangyu wrote: "I hope that with the efforts made by generations of local researchers and scholars, the stereotype of Guizhou as 'the other' in China will be eliminated."

In terms of his literary career in Guizhou, He Guangyu believes that the coming years will be a new age for cultural development. Although some may view literature as being marginalized, with its basic values being questioned and its aesthetic function being largely ignored, He expresses his freedom in creative writing; relishing in that form of self-expression.

He explains that writers writing for the Chinese people should cherish the hard-won freedom involved in writing; it is their responsibility to document the present time with the insights of the past. For writers, the memory and permanence of literature is the wealth of society. "It is the only reason for writers to exist," says He Guangyu.



Producer Enthusiasm - Zhou, producer of the 2012 Yoga Midi Music Festival, featuring local traditional ethnic folk music as well as rock acts new and established.



Working the Strings - At the 2012 Yoga Midi Music Festival.



Trio in Tradition - Zhou (foreground) and associates perform a traditional tune. The more unusual instrument is a Lusheng, a traditional wind instrument common to the Miao ethnic group.



A Cuisine Celestial

“Even heaven and earth cannot exist without the knowledge that is inherent in man. For at bottom heaven, earth, the myriad things and man form one body. The point at which this unity manifests in its most refined and excellent form is the clear intelligence of the human mind. Wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun and moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stones are essentially of one body with man. It is for this reason that such things as the grains and animals can nourish man and that such things as medicine and minerals can heal diseases. Since they share the same material force, they enter into one another.”

– Wang Yangming

For the writer, it was in Qingyan Ancient Town where the food of Guiyang officially surpassed Sichuan as his favorite cuisine of China. Strolling the stone pedestrian streets, his stops at several vendors yielded snacks like *gaoba xifan* (a savory glutinous rice cake porridge comprising more than 10 ingredients including peanuts, sesame, red beans, soy beans and rose water), flavorfully seasoned rice tofu noodles, deep-fried tofu balls dipped in spicy sauce, mild and chewy deep-fried tofu squares, fried potatoes (similar to your basic French fry but heartier and fresh from the field), marinated pigs’ feet (interesting in appearance, surely tangy and satisfyingly chewy, but admittedly not sampled by the writer), stir-fried pumpkin vines, spiced and pepper-infused chicken, beef, mushroom, and standalone deep-fried red peppers. After the spice, highly recommended are iced jelly with rose water, iced Chinese bayberry juice and, for the more hearty, rose wine.



Diverse Dining - Disinterested dog.



*Savory sticky rice cake.
(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)*

It’s all about the peppers. The writer has consumed peppers from across China and Southeast Asia, as well as from more pepper-inclined southerly regions of his home country, the US. But it was in Guiyang where he entered something of a spiced-up culinary nirvana. In Qingyan Ancient Town the piles of tangy crispy fried red peppers are typically mixed with meats, as well as offered up meatless. Setting aside the meat, imagine the peppers themselves as a dish the Pepper God conjured up when he wanted something like a potato chip – a very crispy, very flavorful something-like-a-potato-chip. And once you start eating, with that wildly savory, slightly numbing spice sending your taste buds into another realm of flavor and sensation, it’s hard to stop. But no worries; they sell them by the gallon. I recommend chopsticks; right out of the large jar.

Then there are the pepper sauces. Most if not all Guiyang restaurants mix up their own oil, pepper and herb-based sauces. The recipes vary from somewhat to a lot, mild to very spicy and (based on personal experience) all are delicious. Vegetables are dipped into these sauces, the savory condiment is spooned into soups, or, as the writer likes to do, a dollop is added to the side of a plate for intermittent addition to meats and vegetables. If you are not a spicy food eater but you might like to experiment in increments, ask for your food to be mild and add the pepper sauce gradually. But, really, while in Guiyang you should make every effort to eat like a local. That means acclimating your taste buds to a higher plain of savory existence. It’s worth it.

*Pigs' Feet, Qingyan Ancient Town.
(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)*



Indeed, there is a saying in southwest China: “The people of Sichuan and Hunan do not fear spicy food, while the people of Guizhou fear food that is not spicy.” For sure, Guizhou people love spicy food. Guizhou cuisine is also famous for its savory sour flavor, as well as its spiciness, combining potent flavor and a pleasing texture. Of course, there are also some Guizhou foods which aren’t spicy. Drawn from official sources, below are described a few of the more venerable such dishes.

Potato *ciba* is a traditional snack from Guiyang. It’s made by combining mashed potatoes, adding salt, chopped scallion, a little gourmet powder and water, then all is kneaded into a cake-like dough. When it is fried to become golden, it can be served with sweet sauce and spicy pepper powder, or sometimes with cold side dishes such as *Houttuymia* herb, sour radish, sour pakchoi, and cabbage. The end result is crispy outside and tender inside and with the fresh sweetness of potato.

Or try noodles with tofu pudding. That’s noodles, crispy minced pork, tofu pudding, fried soybean and peanut, pickled Chinese cabbage, fried bean curd, brown mustard, parsley, soy sauce, a little gourmet powder and chopped scallion. It’s a delicious cold noodle dish.

Something more exotic? How about noodles with chitterlings and swine blood. Unlike most Westerners, many Chinese people are fine with eating offal and this type of noodle dish is very popular in Guiyang. It is made of chitterlings, noodles mixed with eggs, mung bean sprouts and fried diced pork. The soup is deliciously red, the chitterlings are chewy and the swine blood is tender. This dish is spicy but not strongly so, and its aftertaste will linger for a while.



Unnamed (and hearty) countryside stew.

(Photo at left by Xiao Yuwen)

Crisp-fried Peppers with Pork (or chicken or beef), Qingyan Ancient Town.



Crisp-fried Peppers (a photographer favorite), Qingyan Ancient Town.

Bean curd is a staple and the local people are happy to eat the low-fat, high-protein stuff in a variety of ways. For instance, start with bean curd roasted on an oiled iron sheet or on wire mesh over a chaff fire. When it has been roasted to be brownish, oily and swollen, it is cut open by a thin bamboo chip and stuffed with a sauce of hot pepper, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, chopped green scallion, mashed garlic and ginger. When it is eaten hot, it is very spicy, tender, tasty and overall delectable.

There is a saying in the Miao and Dong autonomous prefectures that goes: “Three days without sour food will make you stumble when you walk.” Sour Fish Soup is very popular here and increasingly so across China. The sour soup is made from fermented rice water and leafless vegetables, or made of tomatoes, pickled Chinese cabbage and vinegar and then seasoned with many condiments, making the fish especially tender, fresh and tasty.

In restaurants and shops in Guiyang and across Guizhou you will find savory rice noodles with mutton. Boiled with fresh lamb, the soup is then mixed with rice noodles and slices of mutton. The dish is delicious and spicy, but the soup is very clear. After over three hundred years, it still satisfies people’s hunger.

Like across most of China, some foods are a big part of the local culture and tradition. Every year on the fifteenth of the third lunar month, the Miao people prepare a colorful sister meal for Sister Day. This meal is made of various kinds of processed sticky rice of different colors. On this day, girls happily entertain the boys from other villages. Before they leave, the boys ask for the sister meal served by the girls. Hidden in the meal is a specific symbol signifying the girl's intention towards the boy. If it is a pine needle, the boy shall reward the girl with an embroidery needle and threads; a pair of chopsticks or red petals means the girl wants to marry the boy and urges him to prepare for a wedding; but if it is chili or garlic, the boy may have to return home sadly because the girl has rejected him. That's the way it goes, in Guizhou.

A Sticky Story: Bouyei Five-Color Rice

The third of the third lunar month is a traditional festival of the Bouyei people. Legend has it that a long time ago three sisters were married into a village at the same time. One spring their father sent a message to them saying he would come to visit his grandchildren. Everyone in the three families was thrilled and they all wanted to be the first to entertain their grandfather. It made for a tough decision for the grandfather. So he asked his sons-in-law to bring their handmade sticky rice to the junction of three roads, under the big old banyan tree and he would visit the family who offered the most delicious sticky rice first.

All the three families started to make sticky rice. The eldest daughter was working on frying sticky rice balls. The second daughter was busy making *zongzi* (a traditional Chinese glutinous rice dumpling) and *ciba*. The third daughter had five smart girls. They decided to entertain their grandfather with sticky rice of five-colors. The girls respectively dyed the sticky rice into black, red, yellow and purple with baby maple leaves, the root of mangrove, sticky rice flower and lithospermum, and the youngest girl washed the rice so it became pure white. In the end, the colorful sticky rice won the competition and this family was the first to see their grandfather. Since then, the dish has become very popular and remained a traditional dish of the Bouyei people. The five colors also stand for people's wishes for a better life (black means life, red means happiness, yellow means honesty, purple means luck and white means purity).

Still today the Bouyei people judge the cooking skills of women by the flavor of their colorful sticky rice. So, every year on the third of the third lunar month, Bouyei girls are dyeing and steaming their traditional five-color sticky rice.



*Bean curd is a local staple.
(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)*

Red & Sweet, Qingyan Ancient Town.

(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)







Divine Diversions



“The human mind naturally finds pleasure in the principles of righteousness, just as the eyes take pleasure in color and the ears in sound.”

– Wang Yangming



The Moutai.

Guiyang people know how to have a good time; those encountered by the writer, anyway. On one typical occasion the modern artists of the Urban Parts Art Studio extended an invitation to dinner and drinks. Upon arrival at the restaurant and the private dining space, the linguistically-challenged writer was disconcerted to note that no translator was present. No matter. After a typically delicious and somewhat exotic meal, out came the Moutai. Produced in the Guizhou town of Moutai, not far from Guiyang, Moutai rice “wine” (the quotes are there because the stuff packs a punch about 25 percent stronger than tequila) is famous throughout China as the very finest of *baijiu* (white liquor). Much ceremonial sipping and toasting ensued. The language barrier was quickly overcome and a lot of good-natured boisterous attempts at communication and actual laughing followed. All was well with the world. The only regret (other than the morning after) came as a result of the writer’s ignorance. Perhaps he would have savored the drink a bit longer had he then known that a standard bottle of Moutai runs in excess of US\$200. We had three.

About Moutai – In 1951, the clear-in-color, sorghum-based, high-proof Moutai was officially designated as the national liquor of China. Today it remains the preeminent choice for toasts at official government banquets and high-level business dinners. Notably, on occasion of the first US presidential visit to China in 1972, Moutai played a big role as Zhou Enlai entertained Richard Nixon during a state banquet. Nixon, something of an expert with alcoholic beverages, was said to have been an enthusiastic first-time consumer.

The scene at Poo Bar.

It is commonly accepted that in 1935, as the Chinese Red Army traversed the nation by foot in the course of the historic Long March, when the army passed through Moutai Town the potent potion was used to cleanse wounds, as well as to settle nerves, perhaps. It was in part due to this medicinal use, as well as its therapeutic consumption, that then commander Zhou Enlai later famously proclaimed: "The Long March was a success in large part due to Moutai."

Moutai's production and consumption goes back to the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) and it has been a popular and highly praised Chinese liquor ever since. Moutai claimed two gold medals separately from the International Action Committee for Gastronomy and Tourism in 1985 and the 12th International Food Exposition in 1986. In total, since 1950 Moutai has been honored with 14 international awards and 20 domestic awards. It remains an acquired taste for most Westerners, but exports are expanding.

In another indicator of China's rising levels of disposable income, to satisfy surging demand Kweichow Moutai Co., the maker of Moutai, was projected to produce 33,000 tons of the elite liquor in 2012.

Islands of Culture

But the nightlife of Guiyang is not all about drinking Moutai and locally brewed beer with the odd *laowai* visiting town. The nightlife in the city is an impressive reflection of both homegrown and international interests. Rapid communication, the media and mass culture have combined with the traditional nature of the city and this has brought a flourishing of evening activities for families, couples and students. These form what some call, "culture islands" within the city. On any given night you may find people involved in any number of activities, but one particular activity that has stayed the test of time and developed alongside the city is Guiyang's bar scene. It is as vibrant and sociable as in any other modern city.

An important part of any city culture, bars serve a vital social function in the lives of many (not least the writer). They are places that let one blow off steam after a hard day at work, to listen to live bands, or to meet up with friends and relax. Bars offer people an escape from the pressures of work and home in an open and exciting place in the heart of the city. Here, based on rigorous sampling, are some favorites.

Poo Bar is one of the more popular bars in Guiyang. Busy most nights of the week, it is furnished to a high standard and has become a place for those who have purchasing potential. The décor alone is enough to tell you this. Poo bar places its emphasis on high art and culture even in the center of the city's entertainment district. They play live music in a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere, sell high-quality European wine and, most importantly, give the

*Bar Street –
Downtown Guiyang.*





*Fashion in Rock -
Jamming and dressing snappy, downtown
Guiyang*

customer a taste of a unique and active local lifestyle. Under glittering lights, those who want to be seen sip top-quality liquors regard Poo Bar as something of a cultural center. It's a place to meet up and feel like you belong.

For something a little less opulent and less alcohol-related, try one of Guiyang's many cafés, most of which open well into the evening. Cafés are traditionally places for a quiet coffee in a warm, cozy atmosphere. In the cool of the evening many of Guiyang's intellectual types can be found in one, enjoying a cup of fresh coffee, reading a book, trading viewpoints with friends, or networking with other likeminded individuals. Often the owner of these cafés is an affable man with a mind full of stories and there is always a shelf full of books and magazines to one side of the café. The tunes played here range from new-age to jazz and the owner will also sometimes play an independent film or hold debates.

Guiyang has an impressive variety of such cafés. The commercial café-bars serve businesspeople and hum with the sounds of smart phones buzzing and deals being brokered. Another more relaxed type of café, the leisure café-bars, focus more attention on style and culture. They spring up in tiny nooks and forge a customer base in any part of the city, as their customer groups range across all ages and culture backgrounds. Unlike their better financed commercial counterpart, the leisure cafés have fewer funds, so they are more affected by price-raises and other economic problems. Unfortunately, this often means that businesses have a shorter lifespan. To mitigate a short shelf-life, most leisure cafés develop their own quirky style and unique character so as to attract a stable customer base.

*Nightclub at Night -
Fronting a trendy bar in downtown Guiyang.*



While China is traditionally associated with tea, coffee is a drink that combines the cultures of both Europe and America. In recent years coffee culture has experienced something of a boom across Asia and a large number of coffee aficionados have emerged, developing both their cafés and their study in the knowledge of coffee. Many of these café owners have started experimenting, creating coffee with the local, typical elements of Guiyang.

But one need not spend entire evening in a bar or café. There is always the art and the artist waiting in public studios - waiting to chat about their work and perhaps make a sale. In recent years, under the influence of the Western concept of art, many cities in China have built art zones and have moved artists' studios into them to make these places an active art community. Although many artists have been moved into these joint studios, there are some individual studios that still survive. They are either integrated work-spaces combining several artists' studios, or simply an individual studio. Most artists, however, seem to enjoy sharing a single work-space with other similarly minded people.

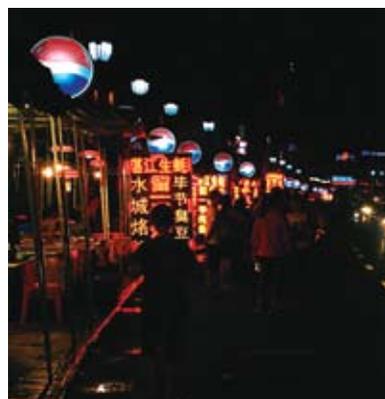
Urban Parts Art Studio is such a space. A dozen artists work in the studio complex in the basement in the New-Century Building, in Guanshanhu District. Each of them has an individual work-room for privacy and to enable them to concentrate on their work. It is strange to learn, after having spent an evening enjoying their hospitality (and their Moutai), that not many people know of this place. It seems that being away from businesses, commerce and consumption, the artists here are able to realize a deeper connection between themselves and society as a whole.

The Late Side

As with any modern metropolis, there seems to be two different sides to the face of Guiyang: the bright, busy days and the cool, pleasant nights. When twilight comes, the city comes to life. Under colorful lights and in quiet alleys, grill restaurants raise their flags, noodle-shops open for business, cafés become full of couples, and students ready themselves for a night out in town. Tearooms sit sedately and nightclubs buzz with noisy enthusiasm. The difference is striking; it seems the city comes to life after dark.

As the evening progresses, Guiyang locals come out and do what could be described as a national pastime: They eat. The famous snack streets of Hequn Road and Shaanxi Road are full after dark. Some of the city's most popular spots, surprisingly, are night snack-shops and the nightclubs hiding in tiny streets in the spaces between buildings. After picking a street and wandering, and after overeating a bit, one can indulge in another popular pastime, a few soothing sips of local Guizhou liquor. After several toasts and linguistic barriers aside, people will get to know each other and attempt to teach the seemingly slow-learning foreigner some essential Chinese.

The youth say that the true nightlife in Guiyang does not begin until 10:00 p.m. When people think of nightlife here, it is usual to think of fashionable adolescents on nightclub dance floors, strangers getting to know each other around the food stalls on Hequn Road, and couples checking out the times of popular movies in the theaters. During the day, these same people can be found wearing neat suits taking the train to work and sitting in air-conditioned high-grade office spaces. But in the nighttime they relax and take advantage of the nightlife in the city.



Fried pepper vendors, Qingyan Ancient Town.

Nighttime in a new city, as the streets of the city begin to hum with life and the smell of fresh food drifts up to the hotel window, the temptation to go out is strong. When night falls in Guiyang the cool breeze freshens the city streets and it's time to put on the nightclub clothes and head out. Despite this ever-present pulse of the disco and the temptations to stay up late, the nightlife remains relaxed; a total contrast to the hectic day-to-day life of the city, which can be a lot to take in for someone not used to the buzz and hum of China's growing urban areas.

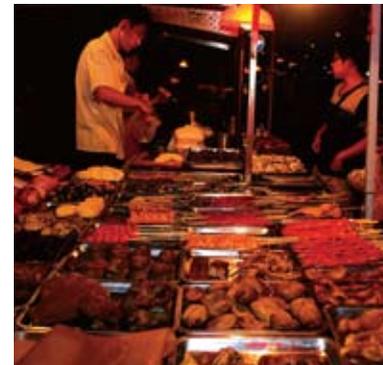
The food stalls along the Hequn Road give off a hot, tempting, soupy odor and shouting vendors hand out tasters to bemused tourists. Customers constantly circulate, well past dinnertime and late into the night, feasting on late night snacks after the evening's drinking. On Feishan Street, another such street, food stands such as the delicious Aunt Yang's Siwawa, wholesome Grandma's rice soup and Dafang's bean curd (served with a smile), cater for more diners and satisfy late-night hunger pangs. It's common to see, at any time of the night, a young man grasping a recently-purchased lamb skewer in one hand, while balancing a cup of Xiaobao's iced purée in his other hand, heading home on his motorbike after a night of partying with friends.



Cuisine du crayfish, at the Night Snack Market.

The HiSo clubs and bars, like the Poo Bar, may cater to the more affluent of Guiyang's residents and white-collar workers who can afford to take their time in bars or Western-styled restaurants, but what about working-class wage earners who can't afford the lights and cocktails of their wealthier counterparts. They entertain themselves more simply and spend the evenings drinking local beer and having simple dishes; a much cheaper yet undeniably pleasant way to spend the evening. And so all are able to enjoy themselves, regardless of budget.

While most of the city is fast asleep, in the nightclubs young men and women are on the dance floor, a lone tourist is having his feet massaged quietly in a massage parlor, Internet cafés are still little islands of activity, full of people either chatting with other web users, finishing off late night homework assignments or channeling their online addiction into playing online games. Some classic oldies leak from the KTV radio station playing nearby. Taxi drivers waiting outside the nightclub talk with each other, yawning, waiting for the rush when the bars finally close.



At the Night Snack Market.

The old days when agriculture set the clock, when work started when the sun rose and sleep began when the sun dropped, are by the wayside in this capital. The younger citizens of Guiyang are a modern people who appreciate the fast pace and theirs is increasingly a 24-hour culture.





At the Night Snack Market. (Photo by Wu Weidi)



*Custom and Charm -
A gregarious Bouyei performer onstage at a
Bouyei ethnic customs festival in the Guiyang
highlands.*

*Cheerful Descent -
In the high country outside of Guiyang City,
Miao kids of Gaopo Township drop from the
limbs and leaves, surprise the photographer
and get a laugh out of it.*

*Merry Models -
A brother and sister of the Bouyei ethnic
group are natural partners in posing.*



Honored Ethnicity

The Bouyei and the Miao ethnic minority groups have resided in the land now known as Guizhou Province for thousands of years. Today, with most concentrated in and around Guiyang, they are part of a greater society very different from even that of a few decades past. Like all Chinese people, they live in a place of ever increasing modernity. In a time past measured in decades, not centuries, the Bouyei and the Miao passed down their culture and communicated around village fires and during multi-village festivals. Today they access and record their history and communicate using personal computers, mobile phones and the Internet. Like all Chinese, they can now transit from their countryside towns and relatively remote mountain villages to major provincial cities in hours, rather than days or weeks. Once out of the car, off the plane, train or bus they enjoy and take advantage of all that those cities offer; the business of commerce, the schools, restaurants, night markets, shopping malls, museums, sporting venues, Internet cafés and, yes, even the bars and nightclubs. But both the Bouyei and the Miao maintain and treasure their own particular and particularly fascinating traditional culture.

This writer had occasion to visit with and photograph both ethnic groups; including while wandering through their quiet and tidy villages, while being surprised by young brothers and sisters suddenly descending a tree in the high-altitude plains, while taking in a major music and dance production in downtown Guiyang, and while participating in a boisterous and fun-loving annual festival along a far-flung green and fertile mountain range. Always noted and appreciated were both groups' graciousness and welcoming manner. Also noted with considerable appreciation was their remarkable talent as artists, artisans, singers and dancers – as well as their inherent good looks.

Both groups seem to possess equally exceptional talent as handicraft artists and performers of song and dance. The Bouyei are particularly renowned for their embroideries and natural dyeing of fabric. Their methods and style of batik designs date back to ancient times and the cloth and finished products remain popular around the world. The Miao, too, are known as skilled crafters of cloth, but they are even more renowned for their jewelry, particularly their silverwork. The intricate and elaborately adorned headdresses for the women are now something of an iconic symbol of Guiyang and the greater region.

The influence of both groups is evident in and integrated within the culture of Guiyang. From their fashions to their performing arts of song and dance, the colors of the Bouyei and the Miao are a part of the urban rainbow of life and living. In the city's restaurants and nightclubs you may encounter either Bouyei or Miao performers playing the Lusheng, a deeply resonant traditional wind instrument. And both men and women can be seen (and heard) belting forth robust yet easy-on-the-ears song in alternating male-female chorus.

Both groups' distinctive clothing, of course, is perhaps most emblematic of their respective culture. Their very unique, very colorful and very intricate patterns reflect a way of dress dating back thousands of years. Yet, an attractive young woman wearing the sharply tailored and traditionally creative design – in the case of the Miao set off by dramatic silver headdress – would form a fashionable and distinctive figure at a trendy event in the cosmopolitan Western cities of Paris, New York or San Francisco. In respect to quality and artistic use of color, the garments, so expertly formed by hand, so intricate in texture and deep in naturally rendered hues, would likely surpass many of the trendier of fashion designers' wares. And these are, in a most venerable of sense, classic fashions – a form of *classic* measured in millenniums, not decades.

Miao clothing varies somewhat from region to region, but in general men are functionally garbed in short jackets and pants. Women, on the other hand, are traditionally remarkable with intricately patterned, richly multi-hued dresses and elaborate designs of heavy silver bracelets, necklaces, and, of course, the artfully crafted and regal silver headdress.

Bouyei men are traditionally garbed in a short skirt over trousers and the head is wrapped with a darkly dyed cloth headdress. Like the Miao, it is the women who add the bright flash of fashion. The females may wear heavily patterned jackets, pleated batik skirts, a turban (of sorts), and extravagantly crafted silver accessories. Single women wear a simple apron, while married women may wear aprons displaying bright and intricate patterns, often representing flowers.

But the clothes are just clothes until they take shape around a human form. Both the Bouyei and the Miao are finely formed humans, in general. The women (in this writer's opinion) are some of the most exotically attractive females on the planet. When they are adorned in their traditional designs with their unique-in-the-world headwear, the effect can be pleasantly staggering (for this Western male). The men, indeed, are also a handsome and hardy sort, and were the writer perhaps a Western female the natural effect may have been somewhat the same.

Healthy, fine of feature and complexion, the women of the Bouyei and the Miao impress, indeed, and that's even before they begin to sing. Song is deeply ingrained in both groups' culture and daily life. It seems that all the men and women are musically talented and robust of voice, remarkably able to hit long and varied high notes. This may not be so surprising if you consider that singing has long been and today remains very much a part of courtship. This is well (and extravagantly) represented as part of Guiyang's signature production of "Cool Guiyang" at the Guiyang Grand Theater. The high energy, good-humored song and dance production features traditional and modern takes on the way of life, talent, and vibrant charm of the Miao and Bouyei ethnic groups.



Clearing Customs - A Miao headdress and its gracious maiden appear at Guiyang International Airport.

Ethnic Distinction - A Bouyei woman, Guiyang highlands.

Village Art - Traditional handicraft painting at Du Village, countryside of Guiyang.

Background in Brief

More than 2,000 years ago the forbearers of the people who would become known as the Miao resided in what is today's western Hunan Province. In the third century they migrated to what is today's Guizhou, spreading further west in following centuries with a particularly high concentration coming to settle in the exceptionally fertile and moist countryside of the land which came to be known as Guiyang. Today there are nearly 10 million Miao in China and about half those reside in Guizhou Province.

Bouyei roots go back even further. Since the Stone Age the people who would become known as the Bouyei have made the land of Guiyang their home. Language patterns indicate that the Bouyei share a common ancestry with the Zhuang, another major ethnic group mainly residing in neighboring regions. Yet today the Bouyei are a people possessing their very particular culture. As far back as about the 10th century the Bouyei and the Zhuang were officially recognized as distinctive ethnic groups. Today there are about three million Bouyei living in China and most are citizens of Guizhou.





*Culture Space –
Home of the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra.
Founded in February 2009, it employs more
than 80 classical musicians from around the
world. Their average age is 26.*



High Culture

Guiyang as a city institution is focused on business, as are its citizens, but a good time and experiencing higher forms of culture are ever-more a part of the prospering city's makeup. The people appreciate art and literature, as well as the great staple of traditional (and modern) Chinese culture; music. In recent years, this appreciation has been fuelled by the inception and success of the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra.

The Guiyang Symphony Orchestra was founded on February 19, 2009 and it is supported, jointly, by the Cultural Bureau of Guiyang City and the many large-scale retail businesses that form the Guiyang Star Power Stores Group.

Since its inception in 2009 it has successfully raised the level of musical awareness and appreciation among people in Guiyang and contributed positively to maintaining Guiyang's vibrant cultural life. It promotes, through its harmonious melodies, harmony in the urban cultural life of local people and tourists alike, who, together, delight at the talents of the musicians.

The orchestra is exceptionally well regarded throughout the city and the province and they regularly have visiting musicians performing, as well as a solid base of 80 domestic and overseas musicians, with an average age of only 26 years old – a vibrant and exciting orchestra! The ability of these musicians is without question; since the creation of the orchestra it has helped to hone the skills of these young talents and enable them to move upwards in the realm of professional music.

Although technical perfection is a must, for the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra members, their performances are equally about passion for the music and on performing a wonderful concert, adding color and culture to summer nights in the city. It has also helped to keep traditional music alive in the rapidly modernizing and urbanizing city, making Guiyang Symphony's folk music a major player in the culture of the region.

*Miao Melodic –
Playing a Lusheng, a traditional wind
instrument of the Miao ethnic group.*

*Writer Note: Though it may not look it, the
Lusheng produces a light and pleasant sound.
A skilled user of such can produce a melody
ranging from easy and settling to robust and
energetic.*



(Photo by Cao Jingjian)

Enterprise and Enlightenment



(Photo by Wu Weidi)

“No one who really has knowledge fails to practice it. Knowledge without practice should be interpreted as lack of knowledge. Knowledge is the beginning of practice; doing is the completion of knowing.”

– Wang Yangming

Guiyang is expanding its roster of new enterprises at an accelerating rate and they are doing it in *selective-smart mode*. High-tech and non-polluting – that’s the plan for development and expansion. This commitment to modern and clean industry, as part of bettering the lives of the people, is official policy.

To wit, excerpted statements of purpose by CPC Guiyang Municipal Committee on the 12th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of Guiyang City:

“[We will] thoroughly apply the scientific outlook on development, comply with the new expectation of people of all ethnic groups for a better life, and always adhere to the concept of making benefits for people, to accelerate the transformation of the mode of economic development as the main line, to secure and improve the livelihood of people as the basic end ... play a leading role in building a comprehensive, well-off society in Guizhou Province, enhance the happiness index for all citizens, and achieve the historic leap in social and economic development.”



At the plant of Guiyang Zhenhua Electronics.
(Photo by Wu Weidi)

CHINALCO Guizhou Aluminum Plant.
(Photo by Wu Weidi)

Business Base

Guiyang is now well into the process of transitioning its industrial base. Natural resources, still, make up much of the foundation upon which new segments are rising. In 2010 the city’s industrial output was 105.8 billion yuan, doubling the estimate put forward in the 10th Five-Year Plan. A good chunk of that income came from the ground. In the immediate region is about 301 million tons of bauxite and 331 million tons of phosphate, about 20 percent and 70 percent of China’s reserves, respectively. The main industries formerly aluminum in focus were equipment manufacturing aluminum, coal, and phosphorous chemicals.

Today Guiyang’s high-tech industries are already bringing in more than 23.3 billion yuan annually. A process known as the “Three Plans” has been undertaken with the aim of bringing into the city people within the creative industries. The first plan, the Employing Talents Plan, aims to bring in high-level experts in their field as consultants. The second plan, the Small Business Plan for Innovative Talents, aims to draw these types of people into the area, and with them, their technologies and businesses. The third plan, known as the Nesting Plan, aims to promote the building of high-quality apartments and encourage graduates at all levels to move to the area and begin work.

Two of the more exemplary of Guiyang-based companies, members of an expanding and progressive Guiyang business community, are profiled below.



GHTOT

Guizhou Haotian Optoelectronics Technology Co., Ltd. (GHTOT) is one of China's leading high-tech sapphire processing companies. The company's HQ and production facilities are located in the Hi-tech Industry Zone of Guiyang, collectively spanning 67,000 square meters. And that's just Phase 1. There is more to come. The company claims some of the finest technologies and facilities for sapphire production and processing, combined with Guiyang's local resource advantages of minerals and a power grid. Integrating R&D, production and sales, GHTOT expects to be one of the leading sapphire materials companies in the world.

Established on November 18, 2010 by the Guiyang Industry Investment Group and a US-based management and technical team, GHTOT has cooperated with GT Advanced Technologies, the well known photovoltaic and sapphire equipment supplier. Areas of collaboration included equipment, technology, R&D, and investment.

Zhucheng Square. (Photo by Cao Jingjian)



*Highest Tech -
Guizhou Haotian Optoelectronics Technology
Co., located in Guiyang's Hi-tech Industry
Zone, produces sapphire wafers for a wide
range of appliances and cutting-edge
communications devices. The company
exemplifies Guiyang's push to technology and
clean industry.*



Utilizing the most advanced sapphire growth technology and furnaces and relying on the long-time experiences and strong technology in crystal growth and optics fabrication from its technical team, GHTOT produces large sapphire crystals of over 100 kilograms and their substrates. The company aims to reach an annual capacity of 30 million TIE sapphire substrates and to be able to supply sapphire substrates of the sizes 2", 4", 6", 8", and even larger to meet the requirements of industries such as semiconductors, chemical companies, aviation, aerospace, national defense, communication and many more.

According to its directors, GHTOT regards technology and intelligence as core facets of company growth. Staffed by a highly qualified and experienced technical team, according to its directors, GHTOT is committed to development, improvement and innovation in its products and technology and is determined to produce stable and high-quality sapphire materials so that it can make a contribution to the rapid development and improvement of global low-carbon, energy-saving, eco-friendly industry.

Native Son

Guiyang is a swiftly developing and industrializing city and many entrepreneurs and enterprises have begun to build their lives and their businesses in its eco-friendly industrial zone. Enter Ji Yong. A Chinese-born US citizen, Ji has returned to the Motherland in a big way.

Ji Yong is one of the leading experts in the world in the field of optoelectronics, having built a reputation for himself with ventures in Silicon Valley and elsewhere in the US. In 2010 he joined GHTOT to produce high-tech sapphire crystal with a number of varied applications, including mobile phone displays, medical equipment and eco-efficient lighting.

The company proved hugely successful in a remarkably short period of time, employing 200 employees in the past two years. Ji is also positive and ambitious about the future of the company, predicting that the company could swell to over 200,000 employees within the next three years. This would be of incredible benefit to Guiyang, as the vast majority of these skilled employees would need to be sourced from outside the city. Nevertheless, Ji is not solely looking outside Guiyang for people to work in the company, he has provided training schemes for local residents and provides further training for those who already work with him. He says he has faith in the ability and drive of the Guiyang people.

Ji also has faith in the city itself as the location for a new wave of industry. Guiyang has a plentiful supply of local raw materials such as aluminum oxide and cheap electricity. And, he says, the government stands behind the project. This would seem to be the case. Pushing for more such high-tech and clean industry, the local government is in discussion with others in similar fields around the globe.

CINTEC

An example of a modern, ambitious Guiyang, CINTEC is an innovative organization that specializes in the production and sale of crushing equipment and specifically, manufacturing complete crushing production lines and crushing stations. Located in Guanshanhu's technology development park, CINTEC is one of the most successful and customer-focused companies operating in Guiyang, according to its directors and city managers.

CINTEC series crushing equipment and energy-saving, environmentally friendly CXS Integrated Crushing Stations have been installed at many hydropower stations, highway construction sites, railway construction projects and mining and metallurgy industries throughout China. Due to the high quality and stringent safety of its products, CINTEC also has an international appeal and this company has also begun to export its products to Southeast Asia, Africa, and Russia. This international success has spurred the goal-oriented spirit of CINTEC and it has split into two subsidiaries: Chengzhi Crushing Equipment Co., Ltd. for production and the powerful and dynamic Guiyang New Technology Research Center for research and development.

Writer Note: GHTOT is about as high-tech as they come, supplying leading global corps (names I was asked not to disclose). Their low-energy consumption and highly efficient products are employed in advanced lighting, smart phone display panels and much more. Unfortunately, corporate security concerns limited photographic opportunities at their production facility.

Crushing Clean - CINTEC mobile crushing equipment. The company specializes in recycling building materials, as well as supporting large infrastructure development projects.



Crusher - CINTEC mobile crushing equipment. The company specializes in recycling building materials, as well as supporting large infrastructure development projects.

Company directors say that CINTEC represents the ability and education of the people of Guiyang. To back it up they point to their experienced engineers and technicians in design, manufacturing, and service. Integrity, they say, is paramount, with design and the production of high-quality equipment that is reliable, providing a strong return and to clients, both domestic and international.

As implied in its company motto, "A wonderful life comes from love. A valuable life comes from innovation," this business, indicative of businesses throughout the region, is about far more than simple production and profit; it is about passion, inventiveness and the desire to create something durable and unique for a domestic and international customer base, directors say.



People practicing Taiji, Guanshanhu District. (Photo by Chen Jinyun)

Metro Meditations



(Photo by Cao Jingjian)



“As he who grows a tree should not neglect to cultivate the roots, so he who desires to grow in virtue should develop his mind.”

– Wang Yangming



Exemplifying the city's push to modernization, efficiency and eco-intelligence, the glitzy Urban and Rural Planning Exhibition Center is one of the most impressive and newer facilities in Guiyang. Located in Guanshanhu District, the nearby Guizhou Museum is to the west and Guiyang International Exhibition Center is to the east. If you are interested in learning more about the future of Guiyang as a modern metropolis, this is where you start.



At 22,000 square meters in area, this steelwork building is 34 meters high, with four floors above ground and one underground. Inside the main exhibition hall, futuristic lighting, high quality sound systems and other state-of-the-art media technology entertain and inform. Indeed, some of the technology represents the first such application of its kind in China.

*Creative Corridor -
Urban and Rural Planning Exhibition Center,
Guanshanhu District.*

*Multi-Magic -
Multimedia LED and projected display on
Guiyang city development at the Urban and
Rural Planning Exhibition Center.*

Scale models of Guiyang's development plan.

The exhibitions within the center are arranged in chronological order, representing the past, present and future. In total, there are five themes expressed in 24 display areas. These include: Achievements in Constructing an Eco-civilized City, the Economic Zone in Central Guizhou, Tourism Planning, Urban Design and many more. All of these exhibitions are embellished with the most advanced architectural concepts and exhibition techniques. The hall is meant to convey the reputation of Guiyang as a model of low-carbon economy, eco-friendly development and green architecture. It displays Guiyang from various angles and attaches great importance to the participation and interaction of its visitors.

On the far-above ceiling, a seemingly starry sky with 90,000 optical fiber lights glimmer; the LED moon waxes and wanes simultaneously with the moon above; the sun casts 66-meter-long sunglows. Under the sky, beautiful scenes such as Yangming Shrine, Maple Lake, Qingyan Ancient Town, and the Olympic Stadium are all portrayed in miniature, in a relief fresco, which is the Guiyang's version of the famous Chinese ancient painting *Riverside Scene at the Qingming Festival*. (The painting, one of China's top ten ancient paintings, vividly depicts scenes of life and work in the capital of the Northern Song Dynasty, Bianliang.) In this shady and pleasant environment, visitors can easily immerse themselves in the feeling that the whole city is surrounded by forest and that forests are scattered all over the city.

Taken as a collective whole, the exhibits and demonstrations of the Urban and Rural Planning Exhibition Center make for a somewhat mind-blowing experience. Below are described just a few.

Old Guiyang, New Guiyang – This area not only displays a modern Guiyang, but also offers a view to the colorful and quaint past and outlooks on the future.

History of Guiyang – Walking into this area, visitors will first see the official flower of Guiyang: the orchid. Touch the orchid on the screen, surrounded by eight orchid petals, gently and a modern Guiyang will come into view. On the right hand side of the orchid, black-and-white photos of Guiyang in the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties as well as from the Republic of China period are displayed repeatedly on LCDs, exploring the past of this city.

Achievements in Constructing an Eco-civilized City – This area boasts a wild profusion of vegetation and blossoms, quiet lanes in the forest, the chirp of birds and the refreshing perfume of flowers. Walking past the artificial “Wetland Park” visitors take in the represented abundant nature and peace of Guiyang.

3D Guide – Aside from the more natural areas, the Achievements in Constructing an Eco-civilized City area expresses the exhibition hall's technical expertise and also features a 3D guide. By combining holographic images, dioramas, settings, optoelectronic technology and automatic control technology, simulated scenes and performances of holographic characters are incorporated, making the scripts and pictures all multi-dimensional: a feature known as Spectra Vision. It is with Spectra Vision's help that a 3D guide is able to introduce the high-tech industrial zone and national economic development zone to visitors.

Multimedia Symphonies – In the Culture and Ecology Area, visitors can have a rest in an arm-chair and listen to various symphonies played by the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra. Relaxing in the chairs, visitors can not only listen to

Future Path - Corridor at the Urban and Rural Planning Exhibition Center.

Up - Interior design at the Urban and Rural Planning Exhibition Center.



different symphonies, but also watch the corresponding videos played on the screen ahead. Through the stories told by the melodies of the music, one can get a sense of the changes that have happened in Guiyang while picturing the modern Guiyang.

Guiyang by (Stationary) Bike – Interaction and participation is a key feature of this exhibition hall. On the third floor, seven bikes are placed in the “Visit in a Green Way Area,” with an LED screen in front of each one. Once visitors start to peddle the bike, they can choose any destination on the screen and they will see the appropriate scenery along their way. Currently, there are four categories of scenery programmed into the bikes. These are negotiating city traffic, city buildings, city ecology, and universities.

Largest Intelligent Scale Model in China – The intelligent scale model on the fourth floor of the exhibition center is the main event. This 1,540 square meter scale model is composed of a 280-square-meter LED screen, a digital scale model and a physical one. The physical model depicts the downtown area of Guiyang in a proportion of 1:1050 while the 1,340-square-meter digital model uses silken fabric to enhance the quality of its images. The LED screen plays a video of Guiyang every 13 minutes. Together the scale model and the



(Photo by Wu Weidi)



*Fast Track -
Model of the now-in-development city rail
line, Urban and Rural Planning Exhibition
Center.*

screen display Guiyang in a fully three-dimensional way and depict its past, present and future.

4D Cinema – On the first floor of the exhibition center is the only 4D cinema in Guiyang. Twenty audience members can watch a film or video at the same time. Unlike a 3D cinema, this cinema not only provides HD films, but also accompanies the visuals with movements of the chair, bubbles, smells, special lighting and many more surprises. Full immersion is the goal.

Guiyang Olympic Sports Center

Representing both the modernization and the public spirit of the city, the Guiyang Olympic Sports Center (GOSC) is located to the south of the city, near the center of Guanshanhu District. It spans more than 116 hectares and the main stadium, the first stage of the construction project, covers more than 30 hectares.

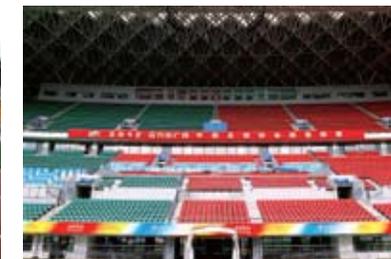
Throughout the construction process, architects, engineers and other experts applied advanced construction techniques and were able to accelerate the pace of the project. The project focused on saving energy, space, water and materials. The building was the first in the province to utilize an in-site simulated experiment, as well as a stadium stand that clings to the mountains. Furthermore, this construction featured a rainwater recycling system and LED night illumination that also economized greatly on the cost of the operation. The completion of the project established a platform for important events, sport competitions, as well as other related industries. GOSC serves as a public sports facility while also hosting domestic and international sports events.

In 2011 the stadium hosted the 9th National Ethnic Minority Traditional Sports Games. It was the location for most of the competitions as well as the opening and closing ceremonies. The stadium contributed a lot to “accelerating development, quickening transfers, promoting mixing” and “going the way of developing science and establishing a city of ecology and civilization.”

*On Track -
Inside the Guiyang Olympic Sports Center*

*Serial Seating -
Inside the Guiyang Olympic Sports Center.*

*A Fine Field -
The very special (and pricey) sod of Guiyang
Olympic Sports Center.*





Night view of Guiyang Olympic Sports Center.
(Photo by Wu Weidi)

The Chinese Super League (CSL), as part of the Chinese football league system, is the country's highest football competition, with hundreds of millions of fans. There were 20 clubs competing in the CSL in the 2012 season. During the course of a season, each club plays the others twice, once at their home stadium and once at that of their opponents, for a total of 240 games.

GOSC is the home of Guizhou Renhe Football Club, the only football team out of the nine southwest provincial teams to place in the CSL.

In the 2012 season, the first three games had an average attendance of more than 45,000 and the average number of spectators in the fourth to eighth matches hit more than 20,000 each. In recent years, the Chinese Football Association Cup, the second most important football tournament in China, was held at GOSC.

The Road Way

Although in the early days of the People's Republic of China, Guiyang built a ring road to better facilitate traffic flow, it became obsolete with the increased mobility of the population and the ever-increasing number of vehicles on the roads. To help ease the inevitable congestion, on January 25, 2012, the 28th session of the standing committee of Guiyang's 8th Municipal Party Committee voted to bring the issue of ring roads back to the table. Within just seven days plans were put in place and by the eighth day the headquarters staff were at work developing a new traffic arterial system.

The plans were as follows: build 4-lane ring roads that were totally enclosed and bidirectional. In total, the length of ring roads would be 121 kilometers with flyovers at all junctions.

Guiyang's ring roads were officially opened on September 27, 2009. The ring roads connect Wudang, Huaxi, Nanming, Xiaohe and Baiyun districts, as well as Guanshanhu District and the High-tech Zone. Today it takes only about an hour to travel around all city districts.

Bringing Guiyang's transport network into the 21st century has had several benefits. It has relieved the pressure on the transport network and enabled people and goods to travel easily from place to place. Guiyang's ring roads, together with the national and provincial highways, also make Guiyang an important traffic hub in southwest China.

Although Guiyang has, necessarily, expanded both its rail and road networks, environmental impact remains a major concern. Guiyang was selected by the Ministry of Transport to be one of 10 cities that will initiate a low-carbon traffic system. And so Guiyang promoted COG (coke oven gas), hybrid-powered auto technology, a transportation information and command center, and providing buses for passengers both in Guiyang and the surrounding countryside. It is estimated that an impressive 45 percent of people will choose public transport when they travel.

Rail Lines

Guiyang is a modern city and like all modern cities it must accommodate an increase in commuters from the surrounding areas and an increase in visitor numbers. This required a great expansion of its network of road and rail transportation to cope with that increased demand. Thus the city initiated a long-term plan to create a network of railways in and around the city.

The initial phase was begun in 2009 and is due to end in 2020. It involves building two railway lines, the No. 1 Line and the No. 2 Line. Line 1 will be a total of 31.9 kilometers on completion, whereas No. 2 will reach 26.8 kilometers in length. This will be the core of the railway network and is known as the Starting Phase.

The second phase will build on the predicted success of the first and will be known as the Developing Phase. It is forecast to run for four years, from 2021 until 2025. The rail routes will expand out from Lines 1 and 2, in Guanshanhu District, and will connect Huaxi District and Xintianyuan District. Line 2 is predicted to be extended to 47.6 kilometers and a new line will also be built, Line 3. At this stage, the total length of the rail network will already be 106.3 kilometers and it will form an effective transport network within the city.

From 2026 to 2030, the railway network will expand and is predicted to be completed, expanding into a third line of 35.7 kilometers. At this point the railway network will be a total of 142 kilometers long and will link the airport and all major points in the city.

It is not only the size of the railway network that impresses, the trains and the stations will exceed all past expectations for design, function and modernity. The stations will be styled culturally appropriate and architects will consult local residents as to their opinions. An environmentally friendly ventilation system will be in place to keep underground stations cool and fresh. Trains themselves will travel at 60–80 mph, allowing residents and tourists to get to their destinations quickly and easily.

Future Pending

In recent years Guiyang has come a long way in terms of its transport network. Previously, transportation and movement around the area was slow, inefficient and expensive. In the past this was attributed in part to Guiyang's geographical location. With no large rivers or extensive road network, most transport was done via horse caravan (*mabang*), which was, understandably, not ideal. In recent years, Guiyang has been able to boast about wide thoroughfares within the city and an extensive road web outside.

This comes at quite a cost. Guiyang is predicted to spend almost 127.7 billion yuan on its traffic-network expansion during the 12th Five-Year Plan period. This will bring the total length of road networks in the urban area to over 10,000 kilometers. By 2015, the highway networks will have become improved further by the completion of a new highway of 212 kilometers, linking each county to the highway. No doubt, progress has been made. High-speed links are well on their way to being completed for the Guiyang section of the Shanghai-Kunming Expressway, the Guiyang section of the Xiamen-Chengdu Expressway, and the Guiyang section of the Kaiyang-Xifeng Expressway, as well as expressways linking Guiyang to Huishui and Qianxi.

Guiyang aims to be truly connected and endeavors to cut travel time between Guiyang and Zunyi, Bijie, Anshun, and Duyun to just three hours, enabling efficient transportation of people and goods from place to place. It also aims to promote swift transfer of goods to the Yangtze River Delta region, Beibu Gulf region and many others. By 2020, it is predicted that the network of existing, under construction, and planned roads will be a seamless link for passengers to travel by plane, light rail, local bus and long-distance bus.



Maple Lake bridges. (Photo by Xiao Jin)

Overall, Guiyang's planned traffic network consists of connecting three circular roads to 16 radiating roads, integrating inner-city traffic and those coming to and from the city from further afield. This development will enable a more productive use of Guiyang's outer areas and will expand the old quarter from 70 square kilometers to 150, exponentially improving industry in Guiyang.

Meanwhile, Guiyang's plans for its Longdongbao Airport are extensive, set to enable a far greater number of passengers and airplanes to enter and exit the city. By 2020 the facility is expected to be at optimum capacity, annually accommodating 15.5 million passengers and 220,000 tons of cargo through its terminals and freight routes. To facilitate this far greater flow, an 110,000-square-meter terminal is being built with 25 aircraft counters and other facilities. The overall cost is expected to be about 3.5 billion yuan.



Road in the air. (Photo by Wu Geng)

Ruminations and Roaming in Epilogue



(Photo by Li Hong)

“The Teacher was roaming in Mount Kuaiji. A friend pointed to flowering trees on a cliff and said, “[You say] there is nothing under heaven external to the mind. These flowering trees on the high mountain blossom and drop their blossoms of themselves. What have they to do with my mind?”

The Teacher said, “Before you look at these flowers, they and your mind are in the state of silent vacancy. As you come to look at them, their colors at once show up clearly. From this you can know that these flowers are not external to your mind.”

– Wang Yangming

I suppose it could be that a foreigner was walking their streets and they thought best to play it cool; not make a fuss. In any case, unlike countless other cities, towns and villages in China, and despite the very few foreigners encountered, I was rarely stared at or verbally scatter-gunned with “Hellos.” Or if I was the object of curiosity, those doing the staring were discrete. Beyond that simple courtesy, the citizens were friendly and polite, seemingly very pleased to have me as their guest in their businesses, villages, offices and other places of culture and industry.



Wanggang Village.

High Country - High Fashion -
Photo shoot in the very rural and very high
Gaopo Township area.



So the people are friendly, the city is bustling and the food is amazing. But the more ecological-minded of visitors may be most impressed by the natural beauty. The city is wrapped with greenbelts and laced with parkland, with rivers and streams running through it all. Beyond the urban corridors are the vast green plains and lush rolling mountain ranges. To say the land is fertile would be an understatement. Everywhere, along the roadways, across the plains, laced into the mountains, are crops. Rice, corn, sunflowers, vegetables of seemingly every sort; the land is bursting with agriculture.

Stop along the way for lunch or dinner, the food you eat will most likely have been pulled from the earth within a kilometer or two. In the case of village dining, the food was perhaps grown, raised and harvested in that rich dark soil just out the window.

It seems an ideal place to be as the climate changes; Guiyang and its greater region. Naturally air conditioned, screened from the sun much of the time by cloud and mist, clean water, abundant agriculture. And now, as the city modernizes and does so with intelligent foresight, clean industry has come to town.



Siblings in Sync - At Qingyan Ancient Town, brothers and sister consider a foreign photographer.



Welcome to Guiyang. (Photo by Li Dengyi)

What would the great philosopher Wang Yangming have said were he still around to consider this new Guiyang? One can only imagine:

The sage builder builds great cities with intelligence and enlightenment, not with interest for self; the sage builder builds for his fellow citizens and those citizens not yet born, not for the needs of the now; the sage builder builds for a better future beyond self, not for comfort in the present; the sage builder builds for Heaven above and Nature below, not for earthly gain or personal edifice.

Or maybe:

I like this place; this Guiyang. It's cool, clean and the food is fabulous!

Lowell Bennett



Peppers in Transit - Guiyang is famous for its peppers... its very spicy peppers.



(Photo by CFP)

Writer Perspective: An Interview by *Guizhou Metropolitan Daily*

Guizhou Metropolitan Daily: What is your background and experience in China? What are some of the cities you visited, and what were some of your impressions?

Lowell Bennett: In January of 2005 I accepted a position as an editorial consultant with China International Publishing Group and relocated from San Francisco to Beijing. I remained with CIPG until mid 2009. The primary publication with which I worked was *China Pictorial*. I traveled a great deal on my own and in the course of representing both the magazine and the publishing house, visiting about 60 to 70 varying locations around the nation, including Tibet and far west Xinjiang. And so as part of my work I produced the photo sites www.SeeTibet.net and www.SeeXinjiang.com. And all the places I have been in China, or almost all, are represented in images at www.SeePRC.com.

It would be difficult to put forth a single or even a few impressions of the varying places I have visited because the nation is so vast and the land and the people are so diverse. But, I guess, if I had to reference one common trait I observed everywhere I went I would say that no matter where I was in China, north, south, east and west; big city, small town, remote village and distant hinterlands, people were friendly and welcoming. You'll see me reference that aspect a lot in my writings on the varying regions. Many of those articles in English and Chinese versions are linked via what I call my Hub Site, www.LowellBennett.com.

GMD: What brought you to Guiyang and how long did you stay in the city? Which places did you visit and appreciate during your stay and, from the perspective of a photographer, what was your impression of those places and Guiyang in general? For instance, which place did you consider to be the most beautiful?

LB: I came to Guiyang pursuant a contracted assignment with the Beijing-based Foreign Languages Press, a division of China International Publishing Group. During my three weeks in the city my task was to shoot photos, gather data and conduct interviews so that I could produce a book of text and images on the modern city of Guiyang. The overall idea was that I would do so from a *Western perspective*.

It would be difficult to designate any single place as being the "most beautiful." There are many beautiful spots in and around the city – many. And each has its own particular charm and attraction. There is the historic and friendly cultural charm of Qingyan Ancient Town, the gentle welcoming beauty of Hua-xi National Wetland Park, the majestic and awe-inspiring mountain range of Kaiyang County and the quaint village charm of Baigong Village. The same goes for Du Village, Wanggang Village and Gaopo in the highlands. The city parks of Qianling, with its mountain, and Guanshan and its lake are really green gems of Guiyang.

Then there is the special sort of manmade natural beauty of the agriculture. Several times I found myself alongside or in the crops belonging to a village, for instance when I was on a silent trail surrounded by corn and fully bloomed sunflowers, and I would stop taking photos and stand there. I just had to pause to take in the lush and fertile beauty of it all... I could go on and on, but you get the idea. Guiyang and its countryside, collectively, is a very beautiful place, indeed.

GMD: During your stay, did you make friends with local Guiyang people? What was your overall impression of the people you met?

LB: I was very, very busy while in the city. So I did not have much time to establish what you would call friendships. But I would like to think that the acquaintances I made enjoyed my company as I enjoyed theirs. Of course, the employees of the Guiyang Information Office who escorted me around were great people – very kind, helpful and patient.

And, in particular, I would say the evenings I spent wining and dining with the artists of Urban Parts Art Studio were good times. They are creative, fun and intelligent people. And the guys really know how to drink their Moutai. Especially the founder of the studio, Dong Zhong. He's a great host and a talented *baijiu* drinker.



GMD: You mentioned “wining and dining”; so what did you think of the dining and nightlife in Guiyang?

LB: Besides Guiyang’s natural beauty and the proximity to some genuinely fascinating countryside and the quaint and venerable villages therein, downtown is great for partying and eating some of the best food on the planet... Of course, you have to like spice.

GMD: What did you think was most special about Guiyang, based on your experience? Any negative impression of the city?

LB: I’ve lived in several places around the world, including Beijing and several cities and islands in Southeast Asia. Guiyang, to me, has a special sort of uniqueness. It is certainly an increasingly modern and growing metropolis, but the closeness to nature and the incorporation of natural beauty, what are now known as urban “green belts,” is quite extraordinary. Of course, due to the favorable geographic position, the air is clean and the climate cool.

The climate reminds me of my US home, San Francisco. That city is surrounded on three sides by the ocean and the bay, so the air currents provide a sort of natural air conditioning. It is never too hot, never too cold and the air is always fresh and nice to breath. Same goes for Guiyang.

Now that you asked about what is “special” I feel I should say more about the food and how that is another quality-of-life factor shared with San Francisco – a city known around the world as a great place to eat. Fruits, vegetables and seafood, in particular, are fresh and robust in that part of Northern California. And because many Chinese-Americans call San Francisco their home, some for many generations and some recently arrived, the varied cuisines of China are available across the city. Guiyang, like San Francisco, is abundant with fabulous produce, fruits and meats. Some of the best anywhere – or anywhere I have been, anyway.

And here I am being 100% honest: The Guiyang style of Chinese cuisine is now my favorite. Before my visit, because I enjoy peppers and spicy food, Sichuan was my favorite Chinese cuisine. Indeed, it was one of my favorite styles of food on the planet. Now my favorite is the food of Guiyang. Really, really, really great food in your city. Here now, thinking about the fried peppers, the pepper sauces and all the great dishes that go along with them, my mouth is watering.

You ask if I have any negative impression of Guiyang... Let me think... Yes, one in particular: The women are too attractive and the city is too far away – for now.

For an article published by *Guizhou Metropolitan Daily* on November 18, 2012
Interviewing Journalists: Lan Lan and Zhang Xinyu



Basic Facts

Area

8,034 square kilometers

Population

4.39 million, including 573,900 people belonging to ethnic minorities

Climate

Humid subtropical climate characterized by cool temperature. Average temperature in summer is 23.2°C (73.8°F). Wonderful air quality: over 95% of days around a year are excellent or good.

City trees

Camphor tree, bamboo

City flowers

Orchid, crape myrtle

Useful Phone Numbers

Directory enquiry: 114

Fire emergency: 119

Police: 110

Traffic emergency: 122

Medical emergency: 120

Guiyang Medical Emergency Center:
0851-5877120

Weather enquiry: 121

Airlines enquiry: 0851-5498908

Railway station enquiry: 0851-8181222

Coach station enquiry: 0851-6504224

Taxi reservation: 9696699

Tiantian Tourist Reception Center:
0851-5841567

Tourist complaint: 0851-6515376

Consumer complaint: 0851-5281315

Taxi and minibus complaint:
0851-5287711

General Office of Guiyang government:
0851-7989005/7989006

Business and Investment Bureau:
0851-7989365

Major Websites:

Guiyang government website:
en.gygov.gov.cn

Cool Guiyang:
www.coolgy.com

Guiyang News:
www.gywb.cn

Guiyang Circular Economy:
www.gyce.cn

Guiyang and Taiwan:
www.gytb.gov.cn

Guiyang Sci-Tech Information:
www.gyppc.org

Guiyang Customs:
guiyang.customs.gov.cn

Eco-Forum Global:
www.efglobal.org

Guiyang Volunteers:
www.gzyzfw.com



(Photo by Wu Weidi)



*Hongfu Temple, Qianling Park.
(Photo by Wu Weidi)*

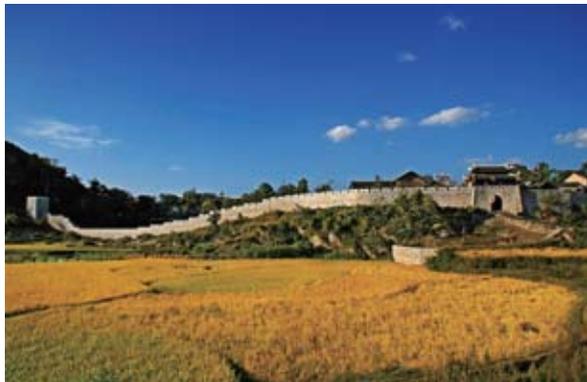
*Wang Yangming memorial.
(Photo by Wu Weidi)*



Huaxi Park.



Jiaxiu Tower. (Photo by Wu Weidi)



Qingyan Ancient Town. (Photo by CFP)



Tianhe Lake Scenic Area. (Photo by CFP)

Tourism

In recent years Guiyang has won many awards, including “Excellent Tourist Destination City of China,” “National Forest City,” “National Model City for Afforestation,” “China Model Habitat City,” “National Garden City” and “China Summer Resort.” In December 2011, it was awarded the titles of “China’s Model City for Social Development” and “China’s Model Clean City.”

Natural beauty in Qianling Park

Located two kilometers in the northwest of Guiyang, the Qianling Mountain is well-known for its quiet and thick forest and lovely lakes.

Historic memory of Jiaxiu Tower

Located on the Nanming River in downtown Guiyang, the Jiaxiu Tower, also called the Number One Scholar Tower, serves as a symbol of the city. It was built in 1597 during the Wanli Era of the Ming Dynasty.

Enlightenment in Xiuwen County

Xiuwen County is the place where philosopher Wang Yangming developed his understanding of philosophy, and taught his theory. Several centuries later, it seems that we can still trace this great Chinese philosopher among the mountains and rivers here.

Folk customs in Qingyan Ancient Town

Qingyan Ancient Town is located in the southern suburb of Guiyang, about 29 kilometers from the city center. Built in 1378 during the Hongwu Era of the Ming Dynasty, it is the most famous ancient town in Guizhou Province.

Karst view in Tianhe Lake Scenic Area

About 24 kilometers from the city, the Tianhe Lake Scenic Area is a typical karst view, capturing the essence of Guizhou’s landscape.

Huaxi National Wetland Park

This was the first national wetland park in Guizhou Province. It consists of three areas: Long River Beach, the Eco-farm, and the Huaixi Scenic Area. The park is an eco-friendly resort offering great natural beauty.

Guanshan Park

Located in Guanshanhu District, northwest of the city center of Guiyang, the park abounds with water and is home to wild egrets.

Zhucheng Square

Located by the Nanming River in the center of the older part of Guiyang, Zhucheng Square is a new city landmark. A sculpture composed of eight huge models of the Lusheng, a traditional wind instrument common to the Miao ethnic group, stands in the center of the square as a symbol of Guiyang’s culture.

Confucius Academy

Lying in the middle of the Huaxi National Wetland Park, the Confucius Academy is a complex combining the architectural styles of the Han and Tang dynasties with unique local elements. It is a cultural landmark for exhibitions, education, training, research and tourism.

Xiaochuhe Urban Wetland Park

Located in the center of downtown Guiyang, this park is heavily wooded and features high bio-diversity. Using low-carbon and energy-saving technologies, the park is a good example of wetland protection.

Nanjiang River Canyon Park

Located in Kaiyang County, 54 kilometers to the northeast of Guiyang city center, the park features a variety of typical karst canyon landforms and numerous waterfalls.

Xifeng Concentration Camp Memorial

The Kuomintang government of the Republic of China (1912-1949) used a secret prison in Xifeng County to detain members of the Communist Party of China and other revolutionaries from 1938 to 1946. A memorial was set up on the site of the prison in early 1977 in memory of the prisoners' patriotism. The site is under national protection.

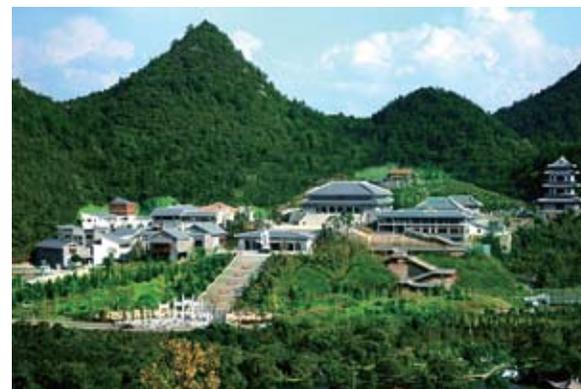
Five Countryside Attractions of Wudang

The Five Countryside Attractions of Wudang District are the Bouyei rice wine of Pianpo Township, the organic farm tour of Ali Township, the folk arts of Du Village, the Pao dishes of the Bouyei village of Wanggang, and the ancient paper-making techniques of Longjiao Township.

Confucius Academy.

One of the many sunflowers in the countryside of Guiyang.

*Xiaochuhe Urban Wetland Park.
(Photo by CFP)*



*Nanjiang River Canyon Park.
(Photo by Xu Yan)*



(Photo by CFP)

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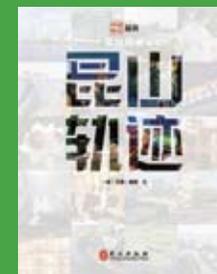
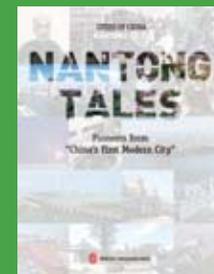
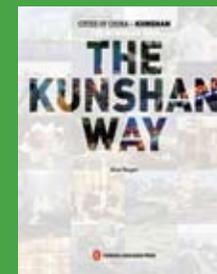
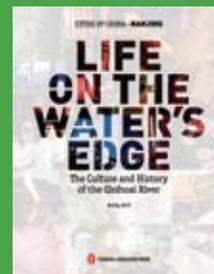
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(Photo by Xiao Yuwen)