

**Who Are the Hosts:  
The Miao Village Tours in Fenghuang, China**

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**ABSTRACT**

As a marginalized rural area in interior China in which the majority of local residents are the Miao, Fenghuang, though economically poor, has rich tourism resources in its stunning views, historic sites, and “colorful” ethnic minority culture. In 2001, the Yellow Dragon Cave Corporation (YDCC) from Changsha (the provincial capital city) obtained a county government-sanctioned monopoly of Fenghuang’s major tourist attractions for fifty years. With growth propelled by YDCC since then, the volume of tourists is dramatically increasing, especially during the past few years, as a result of promoting mass tour packages including local Miao village tours.

In this ethnographic case of local Miao village tours in Fenghuang, I examine tour operators as an emerging dominant power, along with the YDCC, to see how they play an increasingly important role in shaping Fenghuang’s tourism and its society. I explore resistance and acceptance from both the toured (the Miao) and tourists (largely the Han) in their response to global forces of commodification, dehumanization, and alienation. It demonstrates how outside tour operators outmaneuver the local Miao to take control of the tourists, how this impacts the interaction between tourists and the local community, what the local response is, and how these changes affect the ethnic relation between the Miao and the Han. This ethnographic case observes local structural transformation, and illuminates many aspects of local change that have global causes and implications.