



王安江版苗族古歌

Les anciennes ballades Miao de Wang Anjiang
Wang Anjian's Miao Ballads of Old

王安江のミョウ族古歌

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y-
y-
y-
Hxak Lu! Hxak Lu!



Les anciennes ballades Miao de Wang Anjiang
Wang Anjian' s Miao Ballads of Old
Hxak Lul Hxak Ghot

Wang Anjian' s Miao Ballads of Old

Y- 'y" Q" Y- L"

Hxak Lul Hxak Ghot

本书获贵州省出版发展专项资金资助出版

图书在版编目（C I P）数据

王安江版苗族古歌 / 王安江著. — 贵阳：贵州大学出版社，2008. 5

ISBN 978-7-81126-029-8

I. 王… II. 王… III. 苗族—民歌—作品集—中国

IV. I277. 291. 6

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字（2008）第053741号

王安江版苗族古歌

编 者：王安江

出版发行：贵州大学出版社

印 刷：四川省印刷制版中心有限公司

成品尺寸：285×210mm

印 张：90. 25

字 数：2700千

版 次：2008年5月第1版 第1次印刷

书 号：ISBN 978-7-81126-029-8

定 价：1280. 00元

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序. 1

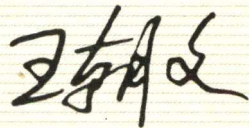
苗族在我们中华大地上的生存历史非常古老，其根源可追溯到四千多年前的黄帝蚩尤时代。三代以降，中经春秋战国，秦汉魏晋，直到今天，中华民族的生活中，都有我们苗族人民活跃的身影。苗族支系繁多，分布广泛，今天的中国西南部，是他们主要的生息繁衍之地。苗族在历史上展转迁徙，他们的足迹始自黄河，跨越长江，从华北而向西南腹地，又从中国西南而入越南、老挝、缅甸。他们还远涉重洋，去到欧洲、美洲和澳大利亚。但无论走得多远，他们的家园还主要在我们贵州。今天约有百分之六十的苗族同胞都住在贵州。

同世界上最古老的任何民族一样，具有悠久历史的苗族，虽然没有文字，但他们有自己的史诗与各种体裁的诗歌与民谣。歌谣是苗族同胞的历史回忆，也是他们日常生活中的感情表达，更是他们对于自己的社会伦理、法律制度的共识形式。

新中国建立以来，苗族同胞与我们国内的各兄弟民族一样，沐浴在党的民族政策的光辉照耀下。苗族的灿烂文化，在多民族的社会主义大家庭中得到了平等的发展。特别是改革开放以来，随着国民经济的发展，苗族人民生活水平的提高，苗族文化也得到了更进一步的发展。

我们贵州台江县的王安江，是一名民间歌师。他在过去的30多年当中，坚持不懈地搜集整理苗族群众中流传的史诗——苗族古歌。王安江为了挽救正在现代化浪潮中日渐湮没消亡的传统苗族文化，历尽千辛万苦，忍饥受冻，甚至家败人亡，终于在他七十五岁的时候，完成了《苗族古歌》的搜集工作。由于他的卓绝努力，他被提名为中华人民共和国文化部的非物质文化遗产人。

中国的苗族有着非常古老的文化传统。我们古老的文化要在新的时代焕发青春，只能期待更多的像王安江这样的文化守望者去发掘和耕耘。科学的发展观强调的是可持续的经济与文化发展。我们苗族当中优秀文化的继承与发扬，有待于更多的有识有志的人士。一个民族的优秀文化，她的文化生命力，也需要持续性的发展。我衷心祝愿《王安江版苗族古歌》能够受到广大读者的欢迎，也能够为经济正在快速发展的贵州，为贵州的文化建设增添一朵美丽的花。



（原贵州省省长、全国人大民族委员会主任委员、苗族）

序. 2

民族精神的守望者

——《王安江版苗族古歌》付梓之前

2007年夏天，刚刚正式成立的贵州大学出版社，甚至还来不及挂牌，便把抢救《苗族古歌》纳入重要的工作计划。大半年以来，出版社的同志深入苗疆腹地，对王安江演唱的《苗族古歌》全本录像、录音，将王安江的传奇人生摄为电视专题片，对王安江演唱的古歌版本进行了认真的校注和订证。最值得称道的是：他们一反原来民间采风成果为“文化人”占用的模式，明确提出了“王安江版苗族古歌”这个概念，对这位民间歌师表示了最大的发自内心的尊重。他们首次在出版物中将民间歌师放到主角的位置上，同时也确实地保存了“原生态”的古歌。《苗族古歌》的搜集校订与出版是一个文化工程。在这一过程中，贵州省省委书记、出版家石宗源同志在了解出版社的本书选题策划之后就作出了重要的指示：“看后很振奋。希望贵州大学出版社在实践中摸索出自己的定位，打造出版品牌，能有更多质量上乘的好作品问世。通过精品力作，经过几年的努力，办成国内知名的出版社，实现社会效益和经济效益的完美统一。”他的指示鼓舞了出版社的同志们。贵州省新闻出版局也将本书列为“全省重点图书”并给予各方面的支持。使本书能够及时面世，为文化建设作出贡献。

每一个民族都有自己精神的文化载体。苗族，这个有着数千年历史的古老民族，承载着他们民族之魂的是《苗族古歌》。《苗族古歌》是一组庞大的史诗，它记录了这个民族的历史渊源、迁徙路线、生产生活、世界认识和生命态度……可以说，它就是一部苗族文化的百科全书。《苗族古歌》不只是关于他们“过去”的生活档案，它更蕴含着苗族人民的生存智慧，体现出苗族同胞存身天地间而与万物相依共处的自谦和自信；表现他们对传统的眷念与执着，对建设和谐社会的一往情深。《苗族古歌》中对生命价值的思考，对今天强调的可持续性发展仍有深远的启迪作用。苗族同胞有着丰富而美丽的语言，但始终没有形成自己的文字书写系统。他们的精神文化于是只能以口耳相传的形式记载下来——这就是《苗族古歌》弥足珍贵之处。

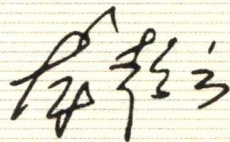
同古往今来的所有文化人群的命运一样，苗族同胞在其生存延续的发展史上，同样不乏战斗与争逐，也就同样充满可歌可泣的悲欢离合，苗族历史上曾有过百战百败的血腥，有过千年被驱的飘零，有过万里迁徙的跋涉。但尽管如此，苗族同胞的古歌旋律从来不曾喑哑。苗族歌师们苍凉的吟唱，穿越了数十个世纪而永不消逝。久远以来，苗族同胞们每当团坐在婚丧聚会的火塘旁、在举行神鬼祭祀的场坝上，甚至在慷慨赴死的出征前，在马革裹尸的葬礼上，人们都可以听到那些如泣如诉的、惊天地恸鬼神的歌

声——这就是苗族人民心底里的那支古老的歌。

每个民族都有自己文化的守望者。这是一批心系民族的文化和命运，念兹在兹、片刻不舍的精神护卫者。他们的情感、灵魂与生命都紧系在民族传统文化上。个人的生命是民族命脉的一部份。中国历史上有屈子投江、永观沉塘，法兰西有韩迈尔先生的“最后一课”。所有这些悲壮，如果再加上我们本书《苗族古歌》的作者——以乞丐身份守望文化的王安江——便成就了更叹为至极的绝响。纵观古今中外，兼具乞丐与文化守望者身份的只有两人，一位是古希腊的荷马：经他的传唱，人类文化宝库中永远保存了古希腊的《荷马史诗》；而另一位大概就要算到贵州台江的苗族歌师王安江了：他用大半个人生，以乞讨这唯一可供他选择的生活方式，追寻苗族的古歌旋律，行走了半个中国，收集整理了一百二十万字的《苗族古歌》。王安江自1968年起开始了苗族古代史诗的搜集。那一年，整个中国都陷在“文化大革命”中，正在扫荡文化，消灭传统。偏偏就在这个时候，王安江踏上了他收集苗族口头歌谣，抢救民族文化的人生苦旅。为了收集《苗族古歌》，王安江忍受着最卑下的生存方式和最恶劣的生活条件，不顾“复辟封建”的政治批斗，把家人的困惑不解，失去亲人的内疚和悲痛都深深地埋在心底……

王安江信守自己的誓言，终于完成了《苗族古歌》的搜集。王安江是用毅力蘸著牺牲，书写自己的整个人生。我在他的努力与牺牲中，看到了苗族同胞坚忍不拔的民族精神。在那个精神文化贬值和遭受冷遇的年代，一个只有小学文化程度的农民，却自觉地尊重文化，尊敬传统，无私地对待文化，勇敢地保护文化。我敬重王安江，因为他是真正意义上的文化守望者。

出版社的同志嘱我为序，序不敢当，“感言”而已矣！



（序者为中共贵州省委常委、省委统战部部长、
贵州大学党委书记、上海师大博士、侗族）

序. 3

I was told that there is a Miao native who spent most of his life to collect Miao's old songs, which moved me deeply and long time. My first experience of Miao oral music was through my wife and her relatives.

Following our wedding, we went for a familial celebration at my wife's elder brother in the Yinjiang hamlet, Kongbai village, not far from Xijiang, in the Leigongshan area of South-Eastern Guizhou province. The isolated mountain village is located in the heart of the Hmu Miao area.

According to Miao traditions, we had brought with us a live chicken as well as gifts for the family. While passing through the main door of the house, we were welcome by two bowls of rice wine.

During the meal, a couple of women started to move around the guests, inviting them one by one with a song to swallow two cups of wine.

And then, after the dinner was over, the long litany of traditional chanting really started. Often an elder woman would start a song which would be taken up by a choir of younger women. Frequently interrupted by bursts of laughter or emotional crying provoked by a particularly sad tune, their singing went long into the night until the early hours of dawn.

The melodies were radically different from Han or occidental music; most startling was the frequent tonal slides, multiple voices descending slowly from a very high pitch to reach a low tone followed by an abrupt ending.

I could hardly believe that I was in the hills of Southwestern China. Indeed, the choir of female voices was drawing me far away to the most remote places of China's northern and western confines. To the grasslands of Mongolia, the high plateaus of Qinghai and Tibet and the sand deserts of Xinjiang. Expert ethnomusicologists would certainly find similar affinities with other ancient people's folk songs around the world.

Welcoming songs, wine-drinking songs, love songs, farewell songs are those we hear most of the time. However these are only part of a much larger corpus that includes long sagas which have preserved the oral culture of the Miao people.

Mythology, history, hardships and migrations have been transmitted without a writing system for millennia. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that these texts should be preserved and published. They will certainly provide a

rich source of information for researchers involved in Miao cultural studies. It seems also admirable or fascinating, that in such a fast changing world, Mrs. Wang still maintained his solitary passion (certainly considered 'eccentric' at the time) and steadfastly collected these oral treasures for thirty years, while he lives as an unknown, an miserable beggar in this world. What he did is a saga by itself.

Eric Bouquet

(译文)

听说有一个叫做王安江的苗族歌手，用了他的大半生时间，收集了一部《苗族古歌》，这令我非常感动。我最初感受苗族的歌唱音乐是因为我妻子的缘故。

我们结婚以后，我们到我的妻舅家去参加一个庆典。他住在黔东南的雷公山地区，离西江不远的巩拜乡，那里有一个叫银匠村的小村落。他家所在的那个小山寨的苗族属于Hmu苗的一支。按苗族的风俗，我们给那家人带去了一只鸡，还有一些别的礼物。才进他们家的大门，欢迎的人就先给我们来了两大碗米酒。在吃饭的时候，又有两个苗族女子在酒席桌间依次劝酒。劝酒的女子用唱歌的方式让客人喝酒。酒席结束以后，真正的传统歌唱才开始。在很多时候，总是一个年纪大一些的苗族妇女先唱一首歌，然后便是好几个年轻的女性接下去合唱。时不时地，歌唱会给一阵阵笑声打断，或者当某个特别忧伤的调子唱出来时，人们会发出令人心恸的哭声。这样的歌唱会持续一夜，整个山寨直到天明时分，都可以听到从这个人家传出的歌声。

苗族的歌唱旋律与汉族的很不一样，它同我们西方人的歌唱也相去甚远。他们在歌唱的过程当中，常常在令人预想不到地方突然变换为一连串的下滑音，好几个歌唱者的嗓音相互扶持着，从一个很高的调位逐步下移，到了一个很低的音阶上突然打住，令人感觉到怅然若失。我很难相信自己现在正置身于中国大西南的山中。事实上，这群合唱女性的嗓音将我带到了一个极偏僻极辽远的地方，那便是中国的北方和西部：青藏高原、蒙古大草原和新疆的荒漠。专门研究民族音乐的人也许会发现全世界的古老民族的民歌相互之间有一种极其相近的地方。苗族的迎客歌、劝酒歌、爱情歌、告别歌等等，都是我们在当地常常可以听闻感受的。但所有这些歌唱在这个民族的音乐与生活中仅仅

是一小部分。这个民族还有他们的传奇史诗，那是保存他们古老的口头文化的宝库。

千百年来，苗族人民通过歌谣将他们的神话、历史，将他们遭遇的艰辛与颠沛流离代代相传。因此这里出版的《苗族古歌》，其中记载的歌谣文本也就具有特别重要的价值。任何苗族文化的研究者，都可以从中获得丰富的信息资源。

王安江用大半生的时间来收集自己民族的歌谣这件事，听起来既让人敬佩不已，也让人感觉惊异。我们今天生活在一个变化迅速的世界里。这个老人能够孤独地保持他的热诚——这在时下就多少显得有点“怪僻”，用三十年的时间来顽强地采集苗族的口头文化宝藏，而他自己只不过是一个不为人知的乞丐，过着极为辛苦的生活……这本身就已经是一个动人的传奇故事。

(法) 庄灵

(序者为苗族文化学者)

编者的话

有这样一首歌：

它一月、两月唱不完

它伴随一个族群两、三万里涉水爬山

它唱了四、五千年从未中断

它的旋律在世界各地七、八百万苗人血液中贯穿

苗族是中国历史悠久的古老的民族之一，当黄河流域出现人类文明之初，便有了苗族的远祖。他们与其他古代氏族部落一起，创造了最早的东方文明。他们最早进入农耕，较早发明铁器，率先运用法律，是远古东方的先进民族。

然而，苗族似乎命定是一个苦难的民族：屡败屡战、屡战屡败和因此带来的迁徙流离、居无定所，几千年来成为这个民族的宿命。在与华夏部落旷日持久的战争中，数战于中原，决战于涿鹿，直杀得“雨血三朝，地坼及泉，日妖霄出，鬼哭于郊”；苗族远祖失败后首领蚩尤被砍头，他戴过的枷锁，掷于大荒之中，化为火红的枫林。那片火红的枫林，与涿鹿大战的悲壮故事一起，流传后世，震撼人心！

这个伴随血与火走过来的民族没有自己的文字，因此，他们把对古老家园的记忆、幸福生活的向往、迁徙路线的追溯、民族精神的凝聚，都积淀在一首充满悲凉的歌中，一代又一代地传唱，一直唱了几千年。

这就是《苗族古歌》。

《苗族古歌》是苗族人民的苦难史，

《苗族古歌》是苗族人民的心灵史。

《苗族古歌》之于苗族的文化地位，就好比与他们同样遭遇的犹太人的《希伯来圣经》一样，是这个民族赖以生存的亘古不变的精神支柱。

对于整个中华文明而言，《苗族古歌》是人类优秀的非物质文化遗产，它所包含的神话、传说、历史、文化、科学、情感和风俗信仰因素，是人们认识苗族的一个重要途径。它承载了苗族文化中最最为可贵的种种观念：万物有灵、生命神圣、众生平等，人与自然共存共荣……，直到今天，仍然可以并在事实上启迪着人类的生存态度。

二十世纪以来，尤其是近三十年来，中国社会发生了重要的转型，苗族社会与其它中国农村一样，发生了天翻地覆的变化：现代化、城市化、一体化、商业化，所有这些都势不可挡地、迅速地改变着苗族社会的文化生活，以至文化基因。电视、电话甚至电脑都已经进入苗家山寨；大众特点的流行文化在悄悄地冲刷并侵蚀着古老的苗族文化传统；前所未有的统一的社会基层组织已经改变了苗族社会的肌体；苗族青年们一批批地涌入城市打工就业，他们世代生息的家园正变得日渐陌生；全民一贯的基础教育使得单一民族文化的传承已经无已为继……。文化生存环境的改变导致了传统文化的失落，以

往肩负薪火相承文化责任的苗族歌师们，连同他们千百年来口口相传的《苗族古歌》日渐湮没。多少世纪来一直在生长更新的《苗族古歌》，正面临着其他一些古老文化财富在后工业时代的似乎无可挽留的命运……

当卡拉OK正随我们追求的现代化从沿海经济相对发达的地区向西部蔓延扩张，当文化短视甚至文化失明的患者正对贫乏的“普世的”商业文化产品趋之若鹜或沉迷其中的时候，贵州的苗疆出现了这么一个苗族的行乞者，一位歌者，一位诗人。

有这么一个人：

他一无所有，风餐露宿，乞行天下

他一诺千金，义无反顾，长歌当哭

他终其一生，无怨无悔，堪比荷马

人类历史上有少数名垂千古的乞丐，人们首先想得的就是古希腊的盲诗人荷马，还有清末那位兴办义学的武训，或许现在，您要再记住一个人的名字——他就是叫王安江的苗族歌师。

王安江，出生在有“苗疆腹地”和“天下苗族第一县”的贵州台江县棉花坪村的一个普通苗族农民，追着牛屁股讨生活本来是他和与他一样的中国农民世代不变的生活方式，可是，一次普普通通的“盘歌劝酒”改变了他一生的生命轨迹。

那是1967年“苗年”，寨子里娶来一位新媳妇，按规矩要由本寨的青年们送她回门，王安江是送亲队伍中的一员。新媳妇娘家住在苗俗传统深厚的嘎养吓大寨，款待送亲队伍的酒席摆上来，自然要“盘歌劝酒”，对不上歌就要喝酒，不会对歌的王安江与本村青年被灌得酩酊大醉。醒来后王安江感到失魂落魄，感到从未有过的挫折：对方寨子姑娘小伙们演唱的古歌在他的头脑里三月不绝，那是天籁，那是机智，那是知识，那是历史。对啊，那还是苗家灵魂的绝响，是苗家祖先与后代的对话！

王安江从此迷上了苗族古歌，到处找人学歌。耕田时学，赶场时学，白天学，晚上也学。听到哪儿有人会唱，便追到那里去听歌学歌。一天，他来到离家不远的凯棠乡来会那里的歌王固沙，老歌师要求与他先盘歌——以唱古歌来一决高下。固沙与他盘起歌来，你来我往，一问一答。歌，唱了两天两夜，但未见输赢。固沙心底里暗自喜欢上了这个小伙子。不久，固沙病重，弥留之际，找人将王安江招到床前，他对王安江说：“商（王安江苗名），前人不摆古，后人忘了谱，古歌如失传，苗家没了魂。你是我们苗家的根，要把古歌传下去啊！”固沙将几首埋藏心中最隐密的古歌传给了王安江，才撒手瞑目而咽气。

于是，1968年，当整个中国都在“文化大革命”旗帜下砸烂一切人类文明的时候，一个农民、一个只有小学文化的普通苗族农民却背负着传承民族文化的重任，走上了一条收集古歌的人生苦旅。如果说，王安江之前收集古歌还只是兴趣的话，现在成了责任：这不但是一个歌师的临终嘱托，这也是一个民族的无声嘱托啊！

从此，王安江迈着比从前更沉重的脚步，走村串寨，寻师访歌，他嘴里哼着古歌、肩上担着手稿，饿了，讨一口剩饭裹腹；渴了，饮一口山泉润喉。山路旁，牧童们远远地看见他，都会大呼小叫：“歌疯子又来了，歌疯子又来了。”夜晚，牛圈里，月光照着一个衣衫褴褛的乞丐整理纸片，忘情地哼着白天学来的古歌。

王安江这一走，便是五万多里，相当于绕地球走了一圈，他的足迹循着古歌之声而去，踏遍了台江、雷山、剑河等贵州苗族县、市，也踏遍了云南、广西、湖南、江西、福建等省的六百多个苗族村寨，甚至远至东南亚，越南的苗家寨也有他的足迹。

王安江这一走，便是一辈子，人生的三百六十五里路呀，从青丝走到白头。

“歌疯子”王安江沉溺在他的古歌世界，他的今生此世是为歌而生的，但他却苦了自己的老婆杨荣美。杨荣美独立撑起一个穷困的大家，累病了，王安江没有回来，累死了，王安江仍不在家。

他的大儿子绝望之余，脱下孝服，点火烧掉了大学的“入学通知书”，恨恨地对弟妹们说：“我们家太穷，考上大学无钱上，不考学校无前途，你们就各自逃难去吧。”然后吞下一包鼠药自尽了。老二、老四一发狠，跑到深圳去擦皮鞋，发下毒誓永不回家。等王安江千里迢迢赶回台江的家中，守灵的老三冲上来，抢下他肩上的一包稿纸，发疯似地扔进了池塘！王安江手中捏着老婆儿子的遗照，呆坐在四壁透光的屋内，无语无泪，身后传来老三的哭诉：“你这个狠心的人，为什么生下我们又不管我们啊”。半晌，一声撕心裂肺的哭喊从王安江干瘪的胸中爆发出来：“老婆、儿子，我欠你们太多了。”

半个月以后，山间小道上，人们又看见了那个熟悉的“歌疯子”，一如从前肩着稿、哼着歌……

有这样一本书：

它承载着一个民族五千年的厚重

它记述着一个人一生的心血

它表达着一群出版人的良知

七十四岁的王安江，患着严重的心脏病，生命已快燃到尽头。但他还有一件事放不下，那便是毕其一生千辛万苦收集来的《苗族古歌》出版还没有个着落。他到县里上访，领导说：“我们是个穷县，发工资都困难，有心无力啊”；他找到多家出版社，人家回答：“这种书不赚钱能卖给谁？”他先后写了上百封信四处化缘，可这并不像当年讨口剩饭那样简单。曾经有一位国际知名的人士找到他，要买下书稿拿去国外。王安江不同意，他隐约有一种担忧：这是我们民族的宝贝，怎样要拿给外国人呢？

王安江死了好几回都死不去，人们说，就是书稿的事还在他心里搁着。

一天，刚刚成立的贵州大学出版社的顾问张坦知道了这个讯息，他连夜赶到了几百公里外的王安江家取回了书稿。贵州大学出版社总编辑流着泪看完稿子说：“出，坚

决出，要出就要前无古人，后无来者。”贵州省新闻出版局刘援朝局长知道了这个项目，第二天就送来了“重点图书补助拨款”；贵州大学党委书记龙超云指示：“好事做好”；老出版人、中共贵州省委书记石宗源看到本书的出版计划后亲笔批示：“阅后令人振奋。”

贵州省苗学会的著名专家杨培德、张晓、张寒梅，台江县文化局的杨华、张文泽，凯里师专的老教师姜柏，贵州甘地文化传播公司的徐乾，上海的电视人杨华洲都不计个人得失投入到本书的整理、校注、翻译、录像、录音和专题片摄制中，甚至，一些学生闻讯后也跑来编辑组作“义工”，他们是贵州大学的吴汉男，苏州大学的刘一霖，重庆商学院的钟雯。

编辑组一致做了三项决定：第一，本书定名为《王安江版苗族古歌》。这是为了表彰王安江一生以生命为代价的收集、整理工作，也是要通过王安江个人传唱的形式保留古歌的“原生态”。使它在古歌演唱的众多门派、众多形式中保持“王安江”的脉象。它与所有之前出版过的《苗族古歌》最大的不同，便是歌师站在台前，不再被知识分子“掠美”。在这本书中参予编辑工作的所有专家学者都只是王安江的“助手”。

第二，本书采用多种手段，立体记录原生态状态的《苗族古歌》。既有苗文的记录，又有汉文的直译和意译，还有王安江演唱全本录像、录音；考虑到《苗族古歌》作为口传文学必然消失的趋势，用现代的方式转换它的传承模式，成为本书关注的所在，从这个意义上说，它更是一部留给人类文明宝库的书。

第三，本书还应收录有关苗族人民生活的大量图片，使读者打开《苗族古歌》，就可以从图片透出的信息，直观地了解苗族人民的文化背景，感受他们丰富多彩的灿烂文化。编辑部人员还与王安江相约，出版的第一本书，拿到固沙坟前烧祭，告慰老歌师的在天之灵！

末了，顺便告诉大家，正在本书紧张进行编辑工作的同时，王安江获得了2006年中央电视台“感动中国”人物提名；获得文化部“中国非物质文化遗产传承人”称号，他那发下毒誓永不回家的第四个儿子，最近也回到了台江县家中，他将陪护这个老人，安渡他的晚年。

贵州大学出版社

《王安江版苗族古歌》编辑组

二〇〇八年四月

EDITORS' WORDS

The Soul of the Miao Ballads of Old

There is a marvellous song

Which the singer recites for one or two months or more

Which travels two or three thousand miles or even more with an ethnic roaming in history

There is an endless song which transmits from mouth to mouth during the four or five thousand years,

The melody resounds always in the mind of seven or eight million Miao people all over the world.

The Miao people are of the great ethnics with longest history in China. When the first twilight of Chinese civilization appeared in the Yellow river basins, their far-ancestors had already lived there. The Miao is also the co-creators of the earliest East Civilization. As we know, the ethnic people were the first agro-farmers, and also the first iron-users. They were the inventor of custom law in the East Asia of old.

Yet Miao people were seemingly destined to go through a miserable course in history. In the remote ancient time they had to struggle for survival as well as suffered frustrations again and again. After they lost their war in the Central Plains of China they had to disband their own homeland and moved southward and southward. Their collective memory recorded in the form of Miao ballads narrates a solemn and tragic story about their war against the ancestors of Hua-Xia tribes. The loss of the fate-deciding battle in the Zuolu drove the Miao scattered eastward and southward. The horrifying battle was so miserably heroic that "heaven rained blood for three days and nights, and the earth split open deeply to the death origin, and even ghosts came out to weep for the dead under the sun." The Miao chief Ci You was beheaded, and as the legend said, the shackles and fetters locked him were transformed into the scarlet glove of maple trees. The tragic scene of maple trees in the autumn symbolizes the remote memory of the heroic event in Zuo-Lu. From generation to generation, since then, the Miao singers hand down the thrilling story full of tears and blood by singing to their people.

The Miao people who survived the blood and fire has no writing system and they preserve their special culture by the way of epics or ballads. Whenever a Miao singer begins to sing, their people are brought back to the days when the Miao ancestors lived with glory and dignity on their own homeland. The Miao ballads always memorize the happy times they once enjoyed, record their ancestral migrating course, and also maintain their self-identification. Therefore their oral literature consisting of a bunch of folk ballads carries an everlasting history, a ethnic life and tradition for thousands years from

yesterday through today to tomorrow.

The oral literature is the old ballads of the Miao,
Which records a miserable history for the old people as well as
A history of spiritual life for the Miao people.

In the sense of a cultural and spiritual experience for a nation, the Miao Ballads can be compared to the Hebrew Testament for the Jews. Both the two peoples created the everlasting heritage which is full of sufferings in this world and struggling for freedom in the human civilization.

As part of the Chinese civilization, the Miao Ballads consists in the excellent non-material heritage of the mankind since it includes the total contents of a people living, covering myths, legends, culture, science, emotions and customs, etc.. The Ballads provides a channel for understanding a very old people in the way of material or spiritual life with various views of spirits pervading everything that exists in the world, of life being sacred in any forms and equal in the sense of nature, which emphasizes upon the peaceful coexistence of man and his environments..., all of those is until today inspiring us in the way of existent ethics.

Since the 20th century, especially during the last thirty years, great changes have taken place with the Chinese society as well as the Miao community. The Miao people has also witnessed both good and bad effects made by modernization, urbanization, cultural assimilation, and commercialism, and therefore Miao people as an ethnic community get used, though slowly in comparison with the region the Han people inhabit, to the newly things such as telephone, television, and computers. In recent years, popular culture characteristic of fashion and instantaneity silently is eroding the old tradition of Miao people, even altering their cultural gene. As the unified social frame like the Han Chinese mode is set up, the young Miao people begin to turn their admiring eye-sights on the values demonstrated by the mainline society. Groups and groups of young Miao rush into towns and cities and become mainly manual laborers and reserve force of labor market. They are becoming strangers to their own traditional homeland. The educational system for the entire Chinese nation has to overlook the unique tradition of a particular ethnic. The altered cultural circumstance leads to a loss of traditional culture, and the Miao singers who were bestowed with responsibility of continuing ethnic culture through the ages are now falling into oblivion. The orally-transmitted Miao ballads are disappearing from the social life in many areas. The Miao people are losing the old mode of existence and spiritually seeking practice. The Miao ballads which as cultural symbols were increasing and renewing in history are now seemingly facing the unavoidable fate that has fallen upon the other national treasures in the post-industrial age.

While a pressing culture symbolized partly by karaoka or street-dance is

spreading from the Chinese eastern coastal area towards the West China, and some culturally short-sighted or even blind people are chasing after the “universally” modern culture with commercialist features, there is a figure appearing on the horizon who is so striking out because he is only a Miao ballad-singer, a beggar-poet.

There is a wonderful man:

He has nothing to show off in this world, even not a pence

to pay for his next supper and bed;

He is wandering through the whole Miao area

Just by begging from village to village,

He is fulfilling his own promise and performing his cultural duty
by collecting and recording Miao ballads.

Just like the great blind Homer, he contributes his life
to Miao ballads with neither enmity nor repentance.

There are very a few beggars who can enjoy the everlasting glory in human history. Like Homer the Greek blind poet or Wu Xun, the beggar-educator of the modern China who was raising money by begging for decades to set up free-schools for the poor children. Maybe we need now to add into the hero-list another beggar whose name is Wang An-jiang.

Wang is a singer of Miao ballads. He was born in a little Miao village named Mian-Hua-Ping of County Tai-jiang, Guizhou Province in Southeast China. His homeplace was the well-known hinterland of Miao settlements. As a common farmer, his way of life had been seemly destined to live on a piece of poor land like his fathers or other Chinese farmers. Yet a folk-ceremony called “pan-ge-quan-jiu” dramatically changed his life. The pan-ge-quan-jiu is a procedure in the Miao folk feast according to which guests at feast should make a singing-compitition of Miao ballads before a loser is decided to drink up the maize-spirits.

That happened in the Miao New Year Festival of 1967. A wedding-ceremony brought a bride to Wang’s village. Three days later, the bride should return to her parents’ family. As a custom, a group of young people has to keep the bride in company to her parents’ home. The young Wang was one escort of them. Since being unable to sing the traditional ballads, all of the young escorts had to take punishing drinks again and again until they were drunken down in the village of the bride’s parents. When Wang sobered up two days later, he felt unprecedented frustrating. For almost a week, the young man could not get rid of the scene where the sing-rivals, the young boys and girls of the bride’s village, were watching Wang and his companion swallowing the losing-drinks and making fun of them. To Wang An-jiang, it was not only a “pan-ge-quan-jiu” (drinking-and-singing) competition. It was a

competition to test their knowledge about Miao's history, and test their wisdom inherited from their ancestors. To Wang the Miao ballads mean the spirit of ancestor and singing the ballads is to make a dialogue between the young and their ancestors.

Since the event, Wang has been charmed by Miao Ballads and went everywhere nearby to learn from anyone who knew a ballad Wang did not heard before. He was always learning folk-songs whenever tilling in the field, going to country-fairs or to a wedding or funeral ceremonies. One day, Wang came to meet the local famous "ballad-king" named Gu Sha who was already a very old man at that time. The "ballad-king" challenged the young man to "pan-ge" (singing-rivalry) before his teaching Wang. Their singing-dialogue lasted two days and two nights. Finally the ballad-king Gu Sha took a fancy on the young man and chose him to be his inheritor of ballads. It was at the dying-bed of Gu Sha that Wang was called to listen his tutor's last words. The old man told the young man: "Shang (Wang's name in the form of Miao), if ancestors do not pass on to the posterity, the tradition will be lost; if the old ballad is lost, the ghost of the Miao folk finds no home. You are the root of our Miao folk, Young man. You must promise me you will pass on the tradition of ballads." After Wang made an oath, the ballad-king taught Wang the last few secret ballads before his death.

Then, in 1968 at the zenith of the Great Cultural Revolution when the whole nation was indulged in destroying all cultural traditions the Miao poet Wang as a farmer, a common Miao man started his travel full of sufferings for collecting old Miao ballads. If Wang was only interested in finding more Miao folk ballads before, from then it had become a mission and fate to realize his promise he made to the old singer Gu Sha as well as to the whole Miao people at the bottom of his heart.

Wang walked on the rugged tracks leading to every remote village with heavier steps to look for every singer and every ballad Wang did not yet know. With a burden of manuscripts on his shoulder, feeling no tired, he sung all the way. To meet his starving belly and thirsty throat, he could only rely on the left-over he begging from villagers. Wherever his figure appeared, buffalo-boys on the roadside and the hill-slopes would shout "the madman-singer, the madman-singer is coming..." In the night, the lonely beggar Wang stayed in the cattle barn singing and sorting-out of ballads he learned from others in the day.

In this way, for over thirty years Wang walked over a long road of forty thousand miles. His footprints marked his seeking for the old ballads of the ethnic people who scatter in big and small Miao villages in the deep mountains of Guizhou. He traveled to the counties of Tai-jiang, Lei-shan, Jian-he as well as more than six hundred Miao villages in the provinces of