

The translations of selected poems from
Aku Wuwu's The Appeal of the Mississippi River (2008)
(61 poems in total)

阿库乌雾：《密西西比河的倾诉》（2008）译文（共61首）

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俄亥俄的花 p.1

P. 1 The Flowers in Ohio

To explore the sacred remains left by
the ancestors of native Americans in Ohio,
I left my homeland for
Columbus,
with curiosity and admiration.

I reside at No. 163, 5th Avenue,
realizing the people and objects here
are still bound by
the fear of winter.

On the flower tree in front of my door,
some pink petals are withering,
and some others are not.

They are smiling on the tip of the tree,
to me, a stranger.

Apr. 13, 2005

我的朋友马克 (p.2)

p. 2 My Friend Mark

The woods at the bank of Ohio River,
was once the altar
where ancient Indians communicated with the spirits.
Ohio is a place I've been longing for.
My friend Mark
lives here.

Mark has been bathed in the Indian spirits
and I grew up in the recitation of Bimo,
No wonder that Mark could translate my poem
"Calling back the Soul of *Zhyge Alu*"
so at ease,
with his love for nature

his reverence for life,
and his genuine sympathy for the less privileged.

The wide and fertile Ohio land
is soaked with the ancient Indian spirits.
It is a land to bear the wise people,
It is the birthplace of several intelligent American Presidents.

The elegant and loving Ohio,
is the forever hometown of friendship,
for my friend Mark
lives here
and sings
towards the East.

April 14, 2005

石头的文明

p. 4 Stone Civilization

At the bank of Ohio River,
stands the Ohio State Museum.
Numerous cultural relics exhibited
outline the ancient Indian civilization.
Forging the stone arrows, stone lutes, stone pipes,
the indomitable Indian ancestors
created human civilization
with stones in North America.
Meanwhile they gave up this starting point,
to pursue the tracks of spirits.
Gradually they vanished in the dust of stone stuff.
All this happened at the bank of Ohio River

The stones in Ohio are extremely tough,
and ancient Indians conquered the beautiful Ohio
through conquering stones.
I realized
The ever flowing Ohio River
is a real museum.

Apr. 15, 2005

印第安四姐妹 (p.6)

p. 6 Indian "Four Sisters"

Thousands of species once
grew on the land of Northern America.
The ancestors of Indians ,
inspired by divine spirits
firstly chose four plants-
corn, pumpkin, sunflower and tobacco leaf.

While preying on animals by using sharp stone stuff,
they found unexpectedly that pumpkin and corn were
not only for making a living,
but for raising their descendents.
Sunflowers are for expressing love,
while tobacco leaf is their way to converse with spirits.

You must be careful while striding on North American land.
Do not trample on the spirits of the Indian ancestors.
Do not forget ancient Indians
had planted the magical lovely

"Four sisters."

Apr. 16, 2005

“死给鹿” (p.7)

p. 7. "Avenging Deer"

The deer and human beings in North America
enjoy the same modern civilization.

In the daytime, the deer live on
fertile grassland
and tranquil woods,
At night the deer always want to go to town
to hear rock and roll
to see homosexual.
The deer rush from all directions of the town,
but the whole city
but for villas of different styles,
magnificent church,
there are but patches of grasslands.

Deer, desiring for civilization,
deer ascertain that civilization means
looking for, looking for an ever-living road.
Deer rush toward the ever-pale highway
under the moon.
The spurring cars will
help them realize their dreams
with no exception.

At dawn, on the grassland along the highway,
with their own frozen bodies,
the deer draw a picture
that even God can not see

My memory flashes back to the Yi land,
those who gain dignity by paying the price of life,
hurt the enemy by hurting themselves,
those daring avengers, facing death unflinchingly,
overlap with the innocent suicide-committing deer.
In my heart, I am certain
they are groups of "avenging deer".

Before dawn,
those avenging deer
with the hurt souls,
rush to the magnificent and mysterious churches
in the nearby towns and villages

In the afternoon, Apr. 17, 2005

Note: The concept of “*sy jiy bbyx*”, (i.e. resistance through death), is apparently shown in the form of committing suicide. The belief is that one’s suicide is caused by his/ her enemy, and self-tortured suicide is a form of resistance, for the person’s dignity is hurt by the other. “*sy jiy bbyx*” is unique for *Yi* people, for whom dignity is superior to life. This belief implies *Yi* people’s view on life. It also reflects that the weak adopts the extreme way to maintain his/ her dignity.

印第安蛇雕

P. 9 Indian Serpent Mound

At Adams County, Southern Ohio,
on a snaky hill,

lies a huge ancient “snake”,
which is a site of snakey totem
of ancient Indians a thousand years ago,
a zigzagged snakey mound.

At the side of ancestors’ tombs,
they piled up this soil snakey mound,
ancient Indians
impeded the foreign invaders from disturbing
the forefathers’ sacred mausoleum.
Snake is the symbol of river.
Ancient Indian civilization
is inseparable from the
old rivers in North America.

Snakey mound is the cipher code of their migration trace,
snakey mound marks their recognition of directions,
snakey mound, perhaps is the shrine to worship heaven and earth.
Ancient Indians, using their feet
took the land of North America as canvas
Among the numerous mysterious pictures,
the wisest one in oriental color
is the snakey mound in Ohio.

Apr. 18, 2005

做人的尊^严

P. 11 The Dignity as a Human Being

“May I get on your car?”
The sound seems to be from a gaunt black woman.

When the car I am in is waiting for green light,
the sound is truly heard from behind the red light,
from the slum in Columbus,
from the day when the masters in Africa
collapsed into slaves in America,
from the bottom of the terrifying fiction *Roots*.

If the body is strong enough,
sacrificing it for money occasionally
is really a charming thing,
only if that is not for living, or surviving.

Such a gaunt black woman,
on the grand street
to seek for sacrificing body with,
I cannot help wondering how far away civilization is.
My answer is human dignity has nothing to do with civilization!

Apr. 19, 2005

阿密苏人 (p.15)

p. 15 Amish

Being annihilated in Europe
they carried the Bible and straw hats
they crossed the oceans to Ohio.
Believing it is God who had saved them
for the sake of God's dignity,
they refuse cars and electric staff,
they sit on elegant carriages,
they use candles to light,

women cover face with black scarves,
men cover the head with straw hats.

When Americans are proud of miscegenation,
they insist on marriage within the race.
The descendants have purer and purer blood,
the road led by god in dreams
is becoming narrower and narrower.

The *Nuosu* people living along the Golden Sand River,
never have experienced oceanic voyage.
With no belief in God,
yet the fate of race
is astonishingly similar with Amish.

Night, Apr. 21, 2005

音乐的翅膀

P. 17 The Wings of Music

All seats are occupied in the splendid music hall,
and the evening gown hides a nostalgic heart.
Tonight, a classical concert is to be held.

The deer are sleeping on grassland peacefully,
the turkeys are combing the tender feather in the forest,
wild flowers are blooming noisily,
making butterflies miss the way.

Rivers are wandering away,
drawing the vines of the Earth,
the forever snow on top of the mountain
like the flowing folklores in the country,
has become the never-ending source of life.

Where is my hometown?
the wings of music
lighten my heavy body and mind
all of a sudden.

At Dawn, Apr. 22, 2005

《红蘑菇》画家

P. 18 A Red Mushroom Painter

On Neil Street, there is a small gallery
whose owner is Robert W. Walker.
Various paintings of mushroom filled the room.
Upon my entry, he gave me a name card
with red mushroom on it.
I named the painting as "Red Mushroom".

The blooming red bright mushroom
Is like dancing women in red dress
Yet, real genuine women wears
slight green skin color
sitting among the blooming mushroom
her fingers and nails
are changing into small mushrooms.

The stems of red mushrooms are like
the plump legs of women.
I believe the painter is a nature-worshipper.

Yet in my hometown
red mushroom is always harmful.

At Dawn, April 23, 2005

同性恋

P. 20 The Homosexual

In Columbus, a city named
after the great explorer of American continent,
I did not meet any one homosexual personally
a genuine homosexual.

But I came to a street
a street of bars for homosexuals.
It is said homosexuals gather at Columbus.
I don't know whether it has anything
to do with the name Columbus.

They do different jobs in the ancient city.
They earn good salary at prestigious profession.
They are active in paying tax, and enthusiastic in charity.
They support arts,
and donate for churches and orphanages.
The lesbians through artificial impregnation
bear offspring, enjoy family happiness
in the day in which spring is fading away
Sex, in the US,
the weird petals
are blooming liberally.

At dawn, Apr. 24

电话里的母语 (p.22)

p. 22 Mother Tongue over Phone

I've lost my voice for days since I came to Ohio.
Tonight, the bell rang unexpectedly,
I hesitated, for fearing not able to speak in English.

Thinking the phone might be from Mr. Bender,
I took up the earphone,
suddenly I heard a voice in mother tongue, affectionate, but rusty.
Lama , a former school fellow, called me from Texas!
We talked and talked in *Nuosu* Yi language.
I put down the phone and felt amazed that
the *Nuosu* language is so clear over the American phone.
My folk people could not speak the mother tongue well,
for having lived in America so long.

I've been busy rushing about for my mother tongue for years.
In the deep forest of languages,
which tree bears my fruit?
I've been making a living on my mother tongue for long.
At the bottom of the world of my life,
who is my terminator?

At night, April 25, 2005

大学里的萨满 (p.24)

p. 24 The Shaman at University

A Korean-American female professor
is explaining shaman in Korea graphically.
It is said, department of Shaman study
is set up in Korean universities.

Shaman tells us
heavenly sound is the Great Sound, and
Nature is the Great Law.
In explaining the truth of life,
the world is not divided into the strong or the weak.
Every species,
every ethnic group,
thinking delicately,
is expressing the meaning of Nature, and
the truth of the soul.

Taking away the mysterious cloak,
Shaman, in fact,
is but the way for human ancestors
to know the world.

Morning, Apr. 26, 2005

俯瞰明尼苏达 (p.26)

P. 26 An Aerial View of Minnesota

Water is the birthplace of every creature,
lake, the metaphor of reproduction.
The villages and towns in Minnesota,
are the flowers and fruits, nourished by lake water.

Water is fed on the blood of every creature,
enriching its own life with no limitation.
The lakes in Minnesota,
entered the dreams of the Indian ancestors since Ice Age.
Under the moonlight, the lives of Indians,
encountered the alluring traps.

Morning, Apr. 27, 2005

明尼苏达的月夜 (p.27)

p. 27 The Moonlight over Minnesota

Moon Town is the name of my hometown,
moonlight looks like Goddess.
The eyesight of *bbu apshy ga vie*,
is lightening on the mountains and rivers.
The moon in Minnesota
over the sky of Minnesota,
is throwing on the ground
countless clear shadows of moonlight,
reflecting the vault completely.

In the eyes of the Indian descendants,
the moonlight in Minnesota,
is just like a sleeping baby, always
with tears.

Apr. 28, 2005

Note: *bbu apshy ga vie*, is a beauty, a demigoddess in the folk tales of *Nuosu* people.

复活

P. 28 Revival

In the legends of the Bannock people,
when children violate the wills of family deity,
he has the right to kill them.

These days I've been visiting the historical remains of ancient Bannock,
and received the gifts from the Indians.
Last night, I dreamed of a heavy snow in Oregon.
the flint mixed in the snow fell me down to the floor,
and the flying snowflake covered my body gradually.

At this moment, I heard a sound saying to me:
Hurry, and build a stone room with the flints,
to hide in it.
Only in this way,
can you revive.
I argued: oh no, it should be a wooden house.

I looked around,
yet could see not half a wood.
I had to follow the guide of the voice,
struggled to build a small stone house
with the glittering flints around.
I summoned up all my courage to move the body
and to lie in the stone house.

Soon numerous golden light shone through the slit,
fishing my soul out of stone house.
I looked down
my body is still lying there, and
the flints around me started to burn.
I was eager to ask
how about my body?
That voice implied impatience---
It is revival, not reconstruction.

When I woke up,
with one of the gifts from my Indian friends gone,
I believe
my family deity
had come to Oregon last night.

Apr. 29, 2005

四色符 (p.31)

p. 31 "Four Colors"

An Indian friend
gave me a special gift,
"Four Colors", mysteriously woven
with vanilla of red, yellow, black and white colors.

They are especially sensitive to
the colors of the race,
just as they are the first to
determine the four directions of
east, west, south and north.

As long as human life is capable of abstraction,
the cognition of enemy
give much wisdom to them.

Apr. 30, 2005

海龟托起的大地 (p.32)

p. 32 The Land on Sea Turtle

There is recorded the great flood
in my ancestors' epic
the kind-hearted *jjut mu ssep nyop*,
relying on the implication of protectors,
with a snatch of smoke,
proved again the human reproduction
is just God's intention.

In the legends of Indians in North America,
the land of most sound and fury under the feet,
has been formed from the back of a turtle,
with assistance of birds, at the bottom of oceans.

Only by get closer to every piece of land
with human conscience,
can you get true motherly love.

May 1, 2005

Note: *jjut mu ssep nyop*, the ancestor of *Nuosu* people in *Nuosu* epic "*hne wo*". Three brothers were farmers. Every time they ploughed the land, it would return to the original form. They decided to find the cause for this. They finally found out the deity in shape of pig did it. What should they do with it? The oldest said to kill it; the second said to beat it; the youngest one asked why he did it. The deity answered that flood was coming, everything was to be flooded. The deity told the three brothers what to do. He suggested the eldest one to build a gold or a closed silver bed/ boat to escape; the second one to build a bronze or an iron one; and the youngest to build a wooden one, since he had no money. When the blood was coming, the oldest and the second oldest brother drowned to death, only the youngest one survived the flood. So *jjut mu ssep nyop* became the first human being on the earth, and the ancestor of *Nuosu* people.

轻盈的信仰 (p.33)

p. 33 Lissome Worship

Only for the promises of the ancestors,
only for the dreams of flying
firmly believing the birds feathers
are the ladders, lain down by spirits,
stepping upward,
Divine ancestors,
are singing liberally
between the ocean and heaven.

With feathers, uplift the height of spirits,
sediment the essence of life,
With feather, ancient Indians
create traceless history.
Their worship of feathers
darkens a lot of many other forms of
worship in human world.

被铁蹄追逐的神驹 (p.34)

p.34 The Chased Colt

At an witchy Indian arts shop
seemly awakening, led by the wizard,
I saw in an oil-painting--
the divine colt is neighing and rushing,
the rider is invisible,
and I could not see the chaser as well.
Only trace of the steps is seen,

what a solemn ,stirring and tragic scene!

As a young boy, I went goat-herding.
On the grassland
I found
tiger tracks.
At the moment, I was the quarry of goats.

May 3, 2005

吉祥的乌鸦 (p.35)

p. 35 Propitious Crows

Be quick, cross over the Mississippi River,
to ask for River God to bless you.
Hurry, in the direction of Canada,
for your enemy is chasing to catch you.

In the depth of history,
when ancient Indians were no longer hunters,
but were cruelly hunted,
on a bare tree,
appeared the first group of
crows with good omen.

In thousands of years,
Nuosu people in accordance with *hxa ti tep yy*,
a magic lection book,
have decoded the language of crows,
informing the world confidently
crows transfer bad news, and
crows are messengers of disaster.

Standing at the bank of the Mississippi river,
I concerned about the bad fortune of the Indians.
That group of crows with good omen,
are certainly flying toward Golden Sand River,
the fir woods being smirched for too long
go on singing.

May 4, 2005

Note 1. *hxa ti tep yy*, the scripture of interpreting the language of crow. It is a kind of forecasting. *Nuosu* people believe that crow always herald something evil or misfortunes.

Note 2. In *Nuosu* idiom, a crow sucked in the smoke on the crematory will stain 9 fir woods. The prophetic crow suggests a belief of animism.

网不住的噩梦 (p.37)

p. 37 The Un-netted Nightmare

The Indian ancestors,
inspired by the spirits,
for invisible desire,
with visible thinking,
wove a magic net of dreams,
wishing to use it to penetrate
each unexpected nightmare,
net the disturbing demons and ghosts in dreams.

I picked a cobble from the bank,
for in its fissure ,
the little fish in the Mississippi River ,
are swimming cheerfully.
While all the Indians netted

the unavoidable nightmare in life
to the little net of dreams,
the life of a race
is turning into an everlasting nightmare.

The little fish at the bottom of the Mississippi River
are still swimming joyfully.

May 5, 2005

保密的葬礼 (p.39)

p. 39 Secret Funeral

The Indians have created a history
of civilization for thousands of years.
Yet, not half a life
spending less half a quarter of time
to ask
in the process of being devoured and gulped,
what should be preserved
and what can be preserved.

Upon the crimes committed by themselves in history,
human beings can only appeal to the wronged ghosts.
The human evil
has become the poisoning snakes
in the cave of history.

On a snowy afternoon in spring,
a pure-blooded Indian
at the town of St. Paul, Minnesota,
refused firmly to answer
my questions about their funeral.

May 6, 2005

"忘忧袱" (p.41)

p. 41 Medicine Bag

At the headstream of the Mississippi River,
I got to know an elderly American Indian,
with my poem of "Calling Back the Soul of *Zhegealu*".
At departure time,
he stared at me seriously
and gave me a little bag made with deer hide.

All of a sudden, my memory
was drawn back to
the barren village along the *Yalong River*.

My grandfather, a hunter,
sending me off to be educated in Han people's land,
in the same eyesight,
bestowed me a similar bag,
musk was inside, he said,
which could drive away the evils and calamity
on the land of *Han* people.

The Indian poet accompanying me said
It is Medicine Bag,
pick up a cobble or a leaf
at a place where you feel happiest,
Open it alone when you feel sad,

the leaf or the cobble inside will fling the wings of happiness,
and rub away the gloomy dust in your heart.

I picked up a cobble at the river shore,
put it inside the bag,
as if my whole life
will be filled with all the liberty and blessings of
the Mississippi River.

Note: *Yalong River* is located in western Sichuan province. It is a branch of *Jinsha River (Golden Sand River)*, the upstream of the *Yangtze River* (the longest in China). It is known for its clean water and rich resources.

黑人的汽车音乐

P. 43 The Music from a Black's Car

“Automobiles are the feet of American people”,
an overseas Chinese told me this on the airplane.

In Ohio,
my dormitory is close to the street.
From morning to night,
cars come and go in an endless flow.

These speeding cars,
are like wild beasts in my hometown,
the loud noisy music
must be from a Black's car.

The Blacks need rhythm,
for they were once robbed of the rhythm of life.
The Blacks love music,
for their history is heavily loaded.
Since automobiles are the feet of American People,
Blacks as legal American citizens
are entitled to striking a tonic sound,
to announce their survival on their own land.

May 8, 2005

诗歌也是世界语 (p.45)

P. 45: Poetry is a Universal Language

I made a promise at the age of 28---
I will converse with the world Parnassus in my mother tongue.

Now, at the stand of the American university
I read my *Nuosu* poetry to
overseas Chinese writers
scholars from Japan and Korea
Native American poets
African-American musicians,
I find it amazing--
If only I write poems with great truth,
Love-inspiring,
touching inner humanity,
I can still have thorough communication with
the peoples speaking English, or Chinese,
even though I cannot speak English.

So I want to tell you—
poetry is a universal language.

May 9, 2005

永远的口弦 (p.47)

p. 47 *Kouxian* Forever

Here goes the ancestors' proverb—
an eagle towering high,
its food is 3 times of its fellows,
A man traveling far
his knowledge is 3 times of his fellows.

My wife deeply believes it.
At the moment of departure,
fearing I might feel lonely in North America,
my wife asked a friend
to bring back a *Kouxian* from my hometown,
put it on my breast
like a cross for a Christian.

In the Mississippi River area,
on the noisiest land in the world,
I produced the purest melody with my *Kouxian*,
to join the magic concerto.

Wherever I go,
Kouxian is my identity,
Kouxian is my blood,
Kouxian is my taste,
sometimes, *Kouxian* is
the spider net in my dream.

On this trip,
I got more than my fellow friends.
-- *Kouxian*, in fact, is
my cross forever.

Thanks to ancestors' proverb.
Thanks to *Kouxian* forever.

May 10, 2005

Note: *Kouxian*, literally “mouth string”, is a Chinese term for any varieties of Jaw harp. It is particularly popular among the ethnic groups living in southwestern China.

黑马

P. 49 Black Horse

When God is nodding,
the mildest animal on North American continent,
is turned into the haunting cannibal,
destroying the dreamy land of the *Nez Perce*
driving the innocent soul
to the west of Pacific.
Let this red-worship race
use blood and escape
to indulge the grass and woods on the shore,
to compose a bloody epic on this land.

Beyond the magic power of coyote
Nez Perce people of mixed blood,
and their wise descendants
produced magnificent blooming flower.
By using shells from Pacific
worn by women on their high breasts

I believe, Black horse
has donated the endangered race
new hope and protection.

May 11, 2005

Note: *Nez Perce*, a Native American people inhabiting northern Idaho.

未来河 (p.51)

p. 51 Future River

The Willamette River in Willamette City,
I name it as "Future River".
The river, peaceful and tranquil, and
an Indian reservation is at the bank
Between the dense woods,
live some Indians, confident and joyful.

I am attracted by its reputation,
as if returning to my own village.
All the eyesight is earnest and dear,
all the barriers
disappear as the wind in the mountain.
Language is just a decoration,
the river purifies my inner soul.

It is coyote, the spirit,
that let "Future River" bear them
such optimistic temper,
or perhaps the immense sufferings experienced
let them own
the gratitude temper at the depth of their life.

At the heart-quaking moment,
Willamette River
has infused my blood vein
rushing on toward future.

May 12, 2005

大马哈鱼

P. 53 The Salmon

It is the magic coyote
in search of permanent residence for *Wishram*
with magic,
turned himself into a drown baby.
He aroused the pity of the willow woman
who owned you with mystery and beauty
and leverage a wandering road for you
with an oak branch.
From then on, you win freedom and
at the Columbus River,
bore a miserable race.

At dawn thousand years later,
the enemies of *Wishram*
robbed you off the decedents of Coyote in the same way,
You regained freedom.
Meanwhile, the asleep race
started to wake up.
On this land experiencing hardships
the game of robbing the food

is always related with salmon.

May 13, 2005

Note: willow woman,

狼烟 (p. 55)

P. 55 Smoke Signal

The Indians have experienced too many slaughters,
flints and tobacco
are what they live on.

Whenever cannibal and accidental disaster befell,
they fired with flints,
to warn the other tribes to flee away.

When they are hungry,
they light tobacco.
The family deity entitles them power in tobacco.

Indians are the species of civilization
dispatched by Heaven.
Yet reaped by uncivilized history.
When the wolf smoke was rising from all directions on American continents,
their character of love of donation
was indebted the factors of helplessness and incompetence.

May 14, 2005

郊狼 (p.59)

p. 59 Coyote

Coyote is a wolf
often with divine means,
he proves human wisdom and power,
as a torch of civilization
through the mouth of Indians,
forever transfer.

He let the mouthless race in village grow mouth,
eat salmon
express love.
Omniscient and omnipotent,
he invented fishing techniques
making women be pregnant to bear offspring.
destroy demons, bless happiness.

He has done such things as amorism with stars
to make two female frogs
to lose genitalia.

He loves and hates,
to express as human morality and conscience,
he lives and dies.
It proves
the liveliness and dearness as a god.

The ancient Indians
are an ethnic group excelling in creative gods,
The magic coyote is
a spirit loving reproduction.

May 16, 2005

灰狼的足迹 (p.61)

p. 61 Coyote Traces

Fire and ice, are the cruel tongue of history.
The civilization of ancient Indians
started with their fear of fire and water.

By means of drilling and flints,
they got fire,
then in name of coyote,
they burned every creature on earth in fire.

Coyote ask the sun god--
"come, flood."
So flood watered the whole world,
The sun god demanded coyote—
"You must reproduce."
"You must bear children."

After coyote created pine tree, fir tree, deer, bear, salmon, otter,
the descendants started to slaughter
each other, using bows and arrows.

In fury, coyote drove away all the descendants,
and left home unhappily.
Leaving a long deep trace---
"My trace is not only visible for the Indians,
but also for the White."

May 17, 2005

食人兽 (p.63)

P. 63 The Cannibal

In the folklores of *Nuosu* people in East Asia,
there is a monster *cox zze mop shut ap ho*
In the folklores of *Chilkoot* people in North America,
there is also a man-eater monster.
The two monsters share the similarities---
eating human beings and enjoy it.

In the different survivals of *Nuosu* and *Chilkoot*,
in the process of struggle,
the two monsters seem to shoulder the same metaphor in the history of different races.
Yet there is a fundamental difference
“*cox zze mop shut ap ho*” only eat human beings
Yet *Chilkoot* man-eating monster
eat human beings, eat cows and sheep, raccoon, and salmon
eat wide mountains, rivers, fertile lands,
and eat the divine wings of *Chilkoot*
and wandering human.

Evils and cruelty
force *Chilkoot* to understand the essence of legends.
Legends, at the same time, become the only amulet / protective talisman.

May 18, 2005

Note: *cox zze mop shut ap ho*, is the chief demon in *Nuosu* culture. It lives in *ndap bup lo mox*, ghost valley. *Nuosu* people believe that good soul is to turn to god, while the bad one to ghost.

毒蛇 (p. 65)

P. 65 Poisonous Snake

This is the apple tree planted personally by *Paiute*.
It is their divine food when chased and slaughtered like deer.
It is the only land in the deep desert
for them to live on.
The branches are laden with fruits,
dominated by a white serpent for no reason.

The omnipotent Coyote
would not permit the poisonous snake
to control his kind-hearted kinsmen.
He led all the fowls
to pick the apples and put them in the dreams of *Paiute* at night.
So when these innocent people woke up,
they would no longer be tortured by hunger and horror.

The poisonous snake found himself being with an empty tree
and the fruits on the tree were gone overnight.
Paiute people got the protection of another tree deity.

May 19, 2005

盗火 (p.69)

p. 69 Stealing Fire

Ancient Indians
honored generosity and charity,
and dishonored greed and stealing.

Only the magic Coyote,
for more people to own fire
assisted by birds and turtles
succeeded in stealing fire
from the Penn family of *Shasta* people.
Since then
fire has been spread to all Indian villages,
ending the history of fire being only occupied by Penn family.

Ancient Yi people similarly
honored generosity and charity,
and dishonored greed and stealing.

Ancient magic *ZhygeAlu* with daring and intelligence
combated with evil Thunder,
empowered human beings the rights of
keeping and using fire freely.
Since then, fire means wealth and equality,
fire means superiority and dignity.

Whoever he is, the gods or humans,
Yi people forbid the others
to get fire at their homes.

Though among Yi people,
there is no such legend of god stealing fire,
they believe that
the origin of human life started with
the origin of fire.

Of course, the tragedy of drawing fire against oneself reoccurred
along the Columbia River
as well as along the Golden Sand River.
People are accustomed to it.

火山湖 (p.73)

p. 73. Volcanic Lake

Without the generous bestowment of fire underground,
there would be no such holy spring,
without the legends of badger and marten,
volcanic lake would not have carried with sly color.

Fire and water, with Nature's primitive force,
and human reliance on spirits,
truly own each other.
Overlooked , the volcanic lake
sometimes is like
the original embryo of North America,
and sometimes
the eyeball of the Indian goddess.

Someone told me secretly—
volcanic lake is, in fact,
the illegitimate child of the Pacific.
I bolted out
hybridity started from the underground.

May 23, 2005

祈祷 (p. 75)

p. 75 Prayer

Ancient Indians,
with thousands years of civilization
created the history of life forever praying,
to the earth, heaven, and Nature,
to ancestors and spirits.

They prayed to stones,
stone god bestowed them tools to survive.
They prayed to woods,
timber god provided them warm protection.
They prayed to the Sun,
liberty and sunshine spread on the earth.
They prayed to the earth
To get food and spring.

They prayed to mountain god,
before hunting in mountain
for catching a quarry.

They prayed earnestly and regretfully after that
for the slaughtered animal.

They pray at removal,
They pray at opening the bag of food,
They pray at wedding,
They pray at birth-giving,
They pray even when war is broken out,
before and after the war.
They pray earnestly.

Today, the sky of North America,
is still sounding Indians' witchy prayer.
Yet the reality of Indian civilization collapse
cruelly informs us

a history written with naïve prayer
while implying the magnificence of nature and universe,
is fragile.
The fatal weakness is
unknown to themselves.

May 24, 2005

飞人 (p. 77)

P. 77 Birdman

Umatilla Indians created the Birdman *E-tsa-wis-no*.
When he was young, *E-tsa-wis-no* was inspired by the swans.
After thousands of times of try,
at noon of fall,
he succeeded in going aloft to join the flight of swans, and
he flew over Wallowa and Blue mountains.
Ever since, *E-tsa-wis-no*
has disappeared in the endless clouds.
He was seen no more and never returned.
And years and years,
long lines of swans flew over
the blue sky of the hometown of *E-tsa-wis-no*.

How wonderful it would be
if only all the Indian tribes
before disappearing into forest, deserts and snow mountains,
could have produced many birdmen *E-tsa-wis-no*!
For only birdmen
can really understand
the genuine characters and personality of swans, the migrant birds.

May 25, 2005

胡德雪山 (p. 83)

P. 83 Mount Hood

You are the divine nipple of Oregon.
Many times in my dreams
you are still as pure as before,
in great splendor.

You never give up
soaking cold milk and kindly eyesight
into the land withered in resistance under your feet.

In the spring rain of Oregon,
with poisonous frigid light
you reacted my glare.
You'll never forget
your maiden body
with the wild rape
frightened, rose to be a mountain.

The creatures, imbibing your milk, bathed in your light
will get rebirth.
I believe the collapsing civilization of ancient Indiana
will revive in your cold and pure comfort.

May 27, 2005

P. 85 跳月 (p. 85)

“Dancing Moon”

Whether it is that my prayer last night is answered,
or the impact of the accurate and adroit translations of my friend
at Cincinnati, Ohio,
at the opening ceremony of the Indian folk arts festival
mysteriously I met the “Dancing Moon” lady
among the crowds,
and we started deep communication.

The bright eyes of the Dancing Moon lady
are more charming than the moon at my hometown.
She told me frankly that
she has a quarter of Indian blood,
as an offspring of Sioux people.

The dress on her, waw embroidered patterns of moon and eagles.
She told me that from her youth,
she had been dancing,
wearing this kind of clothing.
Her hair was decorated with feather
in her hand, a fan of eagle feather.

The bleak and hollow drum sound
broke our conversation
from the mysterious strikes, I heard a wolf’s howl.
Perhaps, any note of hunting race
is always related with a minute sound in nature.

She with noble dignity invited me
to join their magic dance,
and she gave me the patrimonial feather fan
and blessed me—
this is the treasure of my family.
It carries all the divine spirits of good omen.
It will always bless you
and protect all your kinsmen through you,
avoid disasters and pains.

A bright and clear moon arises deep
from my heart.
All of a sudden, I caught a glimpse of
a fish being jumped to the surface of water
by the Ohio River.
I touched its slippery back,
it seemed to understand
to swim back to the deep water.

May 29, 2005

酋长 (p.88)

p. 88 Chief

A chief should be
specially instructed by ancient spirits.
A chief should win
the trust of the whole race.

A chief excelling at hunting,
is a hero in the war.
Omnipotent, singing, dancing and eloquent,
he is generous and spirit-worshipping.

Male or female,
a chief needs to chase the body with flint,

be baptized sincerely,
the messenger of spirits.
Through earnest prayer,
he thanks heaven and earth, four directions, and center.
He makes promise of never yielding,
then ties a belt on the waistband.
He is supported by his people.

Being a chief is a power,
Being a chief is a mission.
The Indians are a race consisting
countless chiefs with independent power.
The Indian tribes are like
bamboo shoots,
easily pulled out
by shoots-eater.

May 30, 2005

母亲 (p. 90)

p. 90 **A Mother**

In the spring of 1804,
President Jefferson
sent an expedition
to explore the large territory
from the Mississippi river west to the Pacific.

Sacajawea,
a mother with a little baby on her back,
worked as a guide and translator of the team.
It was with her guide and help that
Americans passed through the Middle-west
toward the shore of the Pacific Ocean.

In the autumn of 2000,
to memorize this young Indian mother,
who has made great contribution to the country,
the U.S Mint commemorated Sacagawea
on the Golden Dollar coin
with a picture of her carrying her baby.

I don't know whether her kid was later killed or not by the pioneers,
but I know it well
once being a mother,
her deeds cannot be simply be judged morally.

By recording the story of Sacajawea,
I mean to let such a woman
live as a real mother
in my verse.

May 31, 2005

初见哥伦比亚河 (p.92)

p. 92: **On the First Sight of the Columbia River**

Thousands years of your silent sound
are only for inscribing
a zigzagging scar
on North American land?

Having nursed sandwich and Indian nation

as old as you
with great and lively pulse,
You enrich the wide forest,
You sense the mysterious kinship
of the dead woods and the last drop of tear of the hunted.

Your destiny that I cannot predict
attracted me wholeheartedly
with real nihilism.

June 1, 2005

神龟颂 (p.94)

p. 94 Turtle

The backbone of turtle
rose from the ocean
became the embryonic form of North America.
The Indians recorded history in legends since then.

In Indian legends,
the white buffalo tyrannized North America.
The turtle, relying on collective wisdom,
defeated white buffalo
and devoured the meat of the wild demon.

When the Indians
in soft mother tongue,
facing the wide ocean
and never-ending history
glorified the great turtles,
they already started to bear
their determined disaster.

Let my verse
send turtles back to the Ocean.
Let the turtle in the ocean
regain
its unyielding backbone.

June 2, 2005

Chief Joseph的祈祷 (p. 96)

P. 96 The Prayer of Chief Joseph

“The land within the poles
is the homeland of Indians.
The whites can only occupy the land within it.
We grow on this land.
Here buried the bodies of our ancestors.
We’ll never tolerate any others to step on it!”
These are the last words of the old Chief Joseph at deathbed.

Joseph is the new chief of *Wallawaki* tribe
of the *Nez Perce* Indians,
the son of the old chief Joseph.
This name was entitled by the missionary _____

In Washington, the capital city of the US,
Joseph, is a tribe chief and brave Indian, a qualified son,
Upon the Whites cruel murder,
and harsh control, Chief Joseph pleaded for justice,
he gave an earnest, touching speech.

He talked about Indian's sufferings, the disasters, crowning calamity.
He exposed all the evils and crimes
committed by the Whites
in the painful history of Indians.

“Let me be a free man—
Free to travel, free to stop, free to work,
free to trade where I choose,
free to choose my own teachers,
free to follow the religion of my fathers,
free to think and talk and act for myself
—and I will obey every law, or submit to the penalty---
I earnestly hope
God will never hear the grunt of people,
we shall all be alike in one family.”
This is what the new chief Joseph pleaded with the then-congressmen.

June 3, 2005

兽骨 (p. 101)

P. 101 Bestial Bones

The *Nuosu* people seldom make utensils with bestial bones.
They only hang them high to exorcise evil spirits.
It is believed that those demons and devils
upon seeing the bestial bones
will give up their evil ideas.
With arms and legs shivering, they escaped away.
The people and livestock
with the soundless protection of the animal bones
will be safe and flourish.

The Indian people, with bestial bones
created large number of objects,
arrows, axes, gun powder barrels, pearls, necklaces, and bracelets.
Looking over the history of the Indians,
I feel perhaps due to their bad living condition,
in the process of making stone and bestial bone utensils,
they've spent too long a time
too much wisdom.
When the ever triumphant iron weapons were threatening
they started to wake up:
the human cruelty
is far beyond the natural mercilessness
there at the place beyond their imagination.

June 5, 2005

明尼苏达的苗人 (p. 103)

P. 103 The *Miao* People in Minnesota

Tired of the dew in the East,
tired of the loneliness on the motherland,
they migrated far from Burma and Thailand,
across the wide sea,
singing low melodies of reed-pipe.

They meant to leave
after paying respect to the ancient Indian Spirits.
But they were urged to stay by the gleaming light of the waves
in the lakes formed by the pit left
by the horse hoof in ancient times.

Thus with huge reed-pipe,
dipped in the ink of Minnesota lake water
at the places of Indian spirits wandering,
they started to compose another ancient song.

June 6, 2005

混血 (p.104)

p. 104: **Mixed-blood**

We cannot judge
which comes first, winter, or summer.
Likely, we cannot judge if
mixed blood is the final destiny of human beings.

The ancient *Nuosu* people
once felt shameful of mixed blood
and proud of purity of blood,
for in their history
the mixed blood has already been completed.

The ancient American Indians,
in the process of conquering and being conquered,
have been mix-blooded with the conqueror.
Mixed-blood does not mean occupation,
mixed-blood cannot tell victory from failure.
mixed-blood means to coerce the expansion of ethnic groups
with super-natural force.

Yet mixed-blood should not become
a weapon to end life.

June 7, 2005

铜缘 (p. 106)

P. 106 **Fated with Copper**

In the *Nuosu* epic,
copper was the metal that *Nuosu* people firstly found and used.
Copper is used in creating the universe.
The hero *Zhyge Alu* defeated the Thunder with copper net.
Nuosu people counteract evil spirits with copper.
They have been bathed in the clear din of copper drum
and they take pride in their bronze skin color.

I trudged to various villages in Southwest China,
in search of *Nuosu* copper,
Yet I could never find a single copper workshop.

I came to the countryside of Ohio,
An 80-year-old lady is the owner of a copper workshop.
It is said hers is the only workshop
which refuses to adopt modern techniques
and insisted in using handmade techniques,
handed down from the ancestors one hundred years ago.

The five technicians in the factory
are all master and apprentice
from generation to generation.
It is said an old worker
has been sitting on the same stool
striking the copper utensils
for 50 good years.

I am amazed that
in such a highly modernized country
there is still someone persisting old tradition,
lasting forever with no ending
winning respect and love from all of us.

But my people,
who once loved copper so deeply,
once were protected and enlightened by copper
can hardly find any trace of copper.
In the thunder, I lamented alone—
whether the Yi people and copper
have no more any connection?

June 8, 2005

印第安斧头 (p.108)

p. 108 Indian Axe

The weapons once used by the Indians in battlefield,
now as relics of civilization,
lie silently in the museum,
for people to ruminant history.

Its one end is sharp blade,
and the other end is delegate pipe,
the ax handle is a special barrel.

Upon such a weird ax,
I got deeper understanding of
the Indian spirit.

For me, the ax is made not merely out of humor,
let alone a wildest fantasy,
the blade protects the flesh,
while the pipe is the magic door to spirits.

A race steeled in wars
understands wars in its unique way.
An ax signifies
a qualified Indian warrior.

June 9, 2005

绿色的家园 (p. 110)

P. 110 Grassy Homeland

Bathed in the unexpected rain dew
on the vast grassland
the grass sends out fragrant odor.

At the moment,
the dusk spread dispatched silence to wild land slowly.
The countryside with no smoke
is gradually clouded,
in the dark blue between heaven and earth.

On the land of Ohio,
live the people of red, white, black and yellow skin,
thus Ohio chose the grass to be green
as its own permanent color.

The fowls are singing melodies, counting the sprinkling dew on the grass,
and squirrels cannot help dashing and jumping
to beg food from people who get up so early.
The grassland in Ohio,
is human beings' ideal homeland,
and the paradise of wild animals.

June 10, 2005

没有表情的雕塑 (p.112)

p. 112: The Sculpture with no Facial Expression

In Columbus,
in front of African-American Cultural Center,
there stands a sculpture
with no facial expression
made by a Black artist.

I know no deeper meaning of the sculpture,
Yet, I do know,
no facial expression
means the refusal of narrow-mindedness and bias,
and a refusal of the judgment based on skin color.

For humanity, though with great diversity
always leads to
Equality.

June 11, 2005

印第安文物收藏家

P. 114 A Collector of Indian Cultural Relics

I got to know *Daniel Aubbhil*
at the town of *Bucyrus*
As a folk arts collector,
from young age
he loved Indian history and stone arts.

In the year when he was ten,
while working on the farmland,
he picked his first Indian stone utensil.
And now, his hut at woods edge
is already a small museum.
He said, such families in the town *Bucyrus*
there are still many.

Perhaps it is due to the clear history of European immigration,
or perhaps it is due to the memory of long Indian civilization,
in America,
people who love history
have no excuse to reject the Indians.

June 13, 2005

黑色无罪 (p.116)

p. 116 Black is Innocent

Dawn is born from darkness.
Seeds are sprouted from black soil.

Black is the base color of the world.

God created black.
Black is innocent.

June 14, 2005

差异教育 (p. 117)

P. 117 The Education about Diversity

At the Columbus Black Arts Center,
there is a school, specifically for African-American children
to receive primary education for free.

I was told by the schoolmaster that
the children are trained here
through various teaching methods,
they get to know African traditional culture,
the experience of their African ancestors,
they remember their cultural roots.

They also emphasize the racial equality,
the inherent differences between races.
In fact, education can be divided into various categories---
education about heritage,
for the passing down of civilization,
education about communication--
for the mutual understanding of civilizations,
education about diversity—
for the creation of civilization.

When faced with future,
we shall pay more attention to
the education about diversity.

June 15, 2005

Katharine Polak的朗诵 (p. 123)

P. 123 The Poetry Recitation of Katharine Polak

With deep bright eyes
in the low and deep voice
she recited my soul-calling poem in English.

I cannot understand English.
But I realize that
she understands me,
my wandering restless soul
is mysteriously drawn by her.

She had never heard of my people,
and had never known my experience.
Yet, she can understand my poem
with super sensation.
I told her that it was the first time that
the others touched me
through my own work.
She responded modestly----
It is your poetry's height
that sublimates my soul to an even higher level!

Getting acquainted with Katharine Polak,
I got the insight that
on the ocean of poetry,

human beings will have no horror and barrier.

June 18, 2005

黑熊 (p.125)

p. 125 Black Bear

The soul of black bear
like a silver arrow
is hidden in its body.

Indians shooting black bear,
mean to use the ancient stone stuff
and conscience of life
to explore eagerly
the ever-lasting silver torch light,
in the body of the black bear.

June 19, 2005

狼皮 (p.126)

p. 126 Wolf Skin

At an Indian folk art festival,
a white man in Indian array of wolf skin,
was dancing sincerely around a divine drum.
I could not ask him whether he has any Indian blood
for he seemed too solemn and stately.

An old Indian man near me told me
in a deep voice
as long as one put on wolf skin
he is either our enemy
or our folk people.
Wolf, is the animal hurting us most
also the divine animal we always worship.

Neither an enemy of the Indians,
nor a folk fellow of theirs,
I long for, however,
putting on the magic Indian wolf skin.

Suddenly, I spotted
at the center of the wolf skin
a small
bullet hole.

June 20, 2005

鹿角 (p. 128)

P. 128 Deer Horn

Indians hunt the deer
for shooting its proud horn.

If knowing this secret,
the deer won't grow horn.

The ancestor of the Indians,
if not being the owner of North America,
perhaps, they wouldn't have encountered
such a crowning calamity.

June 21, 2005

再见北美 (p.130)

p. 130 Farewell, North America

I met you for the sake of poetry
I departed from you also for the sake of poetry.

What I took is my mother tongue,
What I bring back is my mother tongue as well.

God said: Come,
so I come.
God said: Go,
so I go.

In fact God does not grow
a mouth,
let alone
eyes.
But God must grow
ears,
and bones.
Otherwise, God cannot understand
my mother tongue.

With human spirit,
you prove the brightness of the material.
With the origin of the material,
I inquire the destiny of human beings.

June 23, 2005

阿库乌雾旅美诗：《哥伦比亚河的召唤》（31首）

The Selected Poems from The Call of the Columbia River by Aku
Wuwu (31 in total)

Translated by Wen Peihong (文培红)

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1. 林肯纪念堂

Lincoln Memorial

An elderly American man's belief
is fixed in the country's heart
Washington D. C is thus uplifted
Crowds of tourists with different minds
gaze at the lofty bronze scripture
Yet Lincoln
with deep cold eyes
gazes at everyone
going in and out of the White House

Apr. 30, 008

2. 美国石

An American Pebble

Genuine American pebble
like the nuts on the tree
The white and red pebble
textured the direction of blood
the pebble arrows on the fertile land
the native American's dreams
the native American's tears
The bone joints
from Native Americans' body
are sold in the shop of artistic works

May 5, 2008

3. 自由钟

Liberty Bell

Liberty in North America
What a loud voice
What a heavy weight

The iron object
is a stricken a fissure
Hence Americans gained
the fissured liberty

Apr. 28, 2008

4、对面是加拿大

Canada on the other Side

Niagara River
flows from the U.S to Canada
with waterfalls and rainbows
it indicates profundity and tolerance.
Indian ancestors escaped
from America to Canada
in pains and mother tongue
named this deep river

Canada is across the border
the maple leaf on the national flag,
Nature, magnificence and purity are essence
Enthusiasm, friendship, and peace are ideal.
Liberty and beauty are perception,
are also what this country is founded on

Apr. 24, 2008

5.波士顿小景

Boston Scenery

Fishes are swimming in the sea
which is surging under the sky
Seagulls are fluttering
between the sea and sky

One is standing at the seashore
The ship is sailing away
between the seashores
greetings are dragged

Was there a time
when bandits got ashore here

Apr. 29, 2008

6.独立宫

Liberty Hall

Released from the sea of plights
facing the east, facing the world
facing the *Bible* in hands
American people declared independence
in this building

Now, fly away
the tourists and butterflies
not realizing the greenness under feet
is irrigated with blood
Those once monstrous guns
are grown into trees
yet with no single tree
can bear flowers
It is said American people love flowers
Liberty Hall should be the brightest one
on North American continent

May 6, 2008

7.五月鲜花节

Mayflower Festival

A festival held for flowers
a custom in Minnesota
a mask parade is the most common way.

In the parade,
a pregnant woman wears garlands
passing by proudly under the hot sun.

A young mother
with her broad bare breast,
feeding the baby in her arms.

Someone decorates himself
with bright colored flowers
to release the weird and magic desire
deep in heart
Native Americans, African Americans,
Mexican, *Miao* people, and other Asian Americans
are in the parade

Catching the eyes
like weird magic flowers
they enrich the color of the city

May 5, 2008

8. 美国的冷

The Coldness of the U.S.

Green leaves are gradually frozen by frost
snow is melted into the blood of history
shrewmice have eaten into the divine land
seagulls desert the ocean
serpents attack spring dream.....
The tears of the Indians are frozen long
the bareness and whiteness
are the coldness of the U.S.

in Philadelphia
Apr. 29, 2008

9. 纽约春雨

Spring Rains in New York

It rained in New York
not in torrents, but in drizzles.
Is there a spring in New York
How about summer
I sat there alone
across the Stature of Liberty

In spring, in rain,
the Stature of Liberty is not liberal
Where is liberty
Liberty is in the water of Atlantic Ocean
wandering
like the bait floating over water

Liberty is not shark, nor the dreams of shark
The French who love dreaming
sent their dreams to American people
New York has had no spring ever since

Apr. 27, 2008

10.密西西比河源头

The Headstream of the Mississippi River

Coming back to the headstream of the Mississippi River
staring at the epic-long river
though the new greenness cover the banks
there is no trace of energy of summer.
Listening to the singing of old time
no single spray is sent up
All the spray carried the fallen petals
All the dust of history gathered before me
my eyes are deep and serene
my heart is lonely
another mountain wind sweeps over
telling me you are the milk of forest and rocks
you are the cold blood and tears of the Indian ancestors

In fact, the history of North America has proven
you are the never-dried pulse of the earth

May 9, 2008

11、蛇河

Snake River

You have fed thousands of Indian ancestors
you have devoured their numerous dreams as well.
Thousands of years later
you with dignified gesture
are waiting for me in the valley of North America.
You've kept the gesture of intercourse
with Clear River
till now

As for my custom,
I must beat all of you to death
then pass by between you.
Yet I can not find any rocks
the rocks that ancient Indians and my ancestors
are best at
and fear whether I can beat you to death
Of course I cannot become the spawn of yours.

Your spawns are soaked in river
turned to storyteller
telling any story happening
on every piece of bloody land.

Oct. 25, 2009

12、肤色的荣辱

The Grace and Disgrace of Skin Color

Ever since the divine deity sowed
the coloring seeds in the earth
a monster of one thousand years old
has always been disturbing human history
Even being attacked by tiger or leopards
even being shot by poisonous arrows
even being ruined by time
it is still flowering and blooming at ease
North America is a palette
on which different colors, red, white, black and yellow
have their own scribbles

Oct. 26, 2009

13、Moscow下雪了

It Snowed in Moscow

Last night I read “the Spirit of Snow” in my mother tongue.
This morning it rained in Moscow, Idaho.
It seems that the snow in the world
is interlinked
Whatever time whatever place
the origin of snow
the direction of snow
the never-changed color and quality
its life is melted away in dropping
The snow here is not strange to me
I’ve never dreamed of Moscow in the past 45 years
It is the spirit of snow that has led me here
It is said the snow is to gather in autumn leaves
As a descendant of snow
what can I harvest

Oct. 27, 2009

14、清水河畔的月光

The Moonlight at the Shore of the Clear River

Tonight, moonlight shines over
the silence of Clear River Shore
Wild grass is frozen dead
at the surrounding Indian reservation.
The story piled by rocks
impels the church grow tip
The glittering river
seems still reflects the fear of thousands years ago
If river indeed is the throat of the earth
Clear River never stops its charming singing
over the history it has witnessed

15、秋雨，沐浴西雅图

Seattle Bathed in Autumn Rain

I imagine that Seattle is a gemstone
brought to the west shore
by Pacific's torrents for thousand years
It is a mindless maxim spoken
by God when he is lying to human beings.
It is a star called "beyond heaven"
in my ancestors' folklores
a rain town carried by clouds and fogs
by rain god when the heavenly palace is built
a heritage left to descendants
by alms-giving Indian ancestors

Last night, some fishes went ashore
and some people went to the sea
I indescribably feared that
the genuine Seattle is to wake up unexpectedly

At a noon of late autumn
the Seattle in legends and I
are both bathed in wet and warm moisture

Oct. 29, 2009

16、一只野兔

A Hare

Not the first time for me
to experience sleet
Pullman airport is hibernating
Yet, being welcomed by a hare
upon my getting off the plane
is once out of a thousand years

Hare, hare, you are my savior
Be quick to take me to visit God
I bring only my mother tongue
I bring only my poetry
I wish God
to listen to my mother tongue
to listen to my poetry

Hare, hare, you are the master
I am the hare instead
You've been waiting for me for thousands of years
for the harsh journey of my mother tongue
for the arduous trip of my poetry

Oct. 30, 2009

17、 Pullman的秋寒 **The Coldness in Pullman's Autumn**

The piercing coldness at sunset
If there is still bone left in my body
attacks me and dried grasses constantly.
when will I share the same fate with the dried grasses

Between the earth-covering grasses
and me a traveller, worldwide
there never grows a luxuriant green tree
which is to tell
the story of ancient woods
as if it is my turn to tell the memory of my people

I imagine here should live
wild deer, wild bear, and wild wolves
and live the eagle-worshipping race
Yet, all have disappeared into autumn wind and falling leaves

the greenness occasionally insight
is the bands of earth
as if the footprints I'm to leave

The sunset informs me
there is no autumn in Pullman
At the moment
my gloomy hometown
is awakening from a dream

Oct 31, 2009

18、哥伦比亚河 **The Columbia River**

I've been dreaming missing you
the source of life for American west

You've fed numerous salmon
They have spawned constantly in your body
Indian ancestors at your side have woven their myth of life
accepted love and war

My hand touched your coldness
perhaps that is due to my own coldness.

In the woods at the shore
wild deer are chasing after falling leaves
Crows rest on the huge rocks at shore
with the "*hxa ti tep yy*" I carried
tell me "forget"
this moving word
is the only taboo obeyed
on the land you've swept over

Nov. 1, 2009

19、红果树 **Red-fruited Hawthorn**

Stepping on the fallen leaves
I returned to Salem,
The autumn wind
in the year before my arrival

had taken away all the leaves on the trees

Leaving all the red berries
with the naked brightness
and all the poisonous juice in the body
make the sunlight of the town
extremely piercing

The people in Salem
plant the tree with poisonous fruits
merely for appreciation
desiring for a kind of
poisonous beauty

20、波特兰之秋

The Autumn in Portland

The appointment with this autumn
I've been waiting for 45 autumns

To be frank I am only eager to
be freely bathed in the rain of Portland
Then pick a red leaf
to bring back home
Telling the woods in my hometown
My drifting soul
returns home at last.

Nov. 3, 2009

21、俄勒冈下雪

It Snows in Oregon

It snows heavily in Oregon
The plane I am in for Oregon is landing gradually
like heavy snowflakes
carrying people of different skin colors
-- red yellow black and white
with no difference of ranks
At last Oregon does not fall
only the snow thicker and thicker

The land is fertile in Oregon rich in crops
the Columbia River never stops singing

Standing at the shore long
a maple leaf is turned into a nameless bird
calling for my infant name
My shade and my soul
are superposed in snow light and maple woods
Led by the Indian ancestors
the Pacific Ocean lies mildly along with Oregon

The snow rises and the snow falls
How noble and solemn Oregon is
standing on the land of Oregon
I turn into wild grass
water-drop, duckweed, pebble
or liberal snowflake
Oregon, at the moment enters my verse proudly

Nov. 4, 2009

22、母语，插翅难飞

——参观印第安家庭博物馆

Mother Tongue, Hard to Fly on Wing

---Upon Visiting an Indian Family Museum

A drop of sacred water
in change of infinite dignity of lives
Yet in a weird game
the soul is lost.

From the soul to limbs to wings
wind sweeps over the river
Tears enrich dreamland
who has taken you away
On the remains of ancient Indians
I imagine you ever went beyond
the bondage of time and space

The knife carving stone
the axe cutting wood
the arrow shooting enemy
the net for fishing and filtrating dreams
is lying in the museum to rot

Only deer antlers, bear skin, wolf skin and eagle quill
are evidences of the vanished history

As the last bet
whatever result is merely a part of game

In the museum
I spotted a drop of tear
in the eyes of the storyteller of apparently mixed blood
sharp like the knife blade

Nov. 8, 2009

23、北美第四大瀑布 **The Fourth Largest Waterfall in North America**

Glorious as rainbow
you hide yourself in
the deep forests at the bank of the Columbia River.

You are the beard of Indian ancestors' spirits
that indicates to their descendants
the forever distance between life and heaven
You are the tear pillar of the Indian chiefs while praying
exhibiting their sacred glory in the glistening teardrops
recording their history of being weak in the falling tears.

You are a colorful pen
to write the energy of life
You are a sharp knife
to get liberty and independence
You are a naked goddess
to whither the evil eyesight of the enemies

You are the biggest exclamatory mark
carved in the evil bone
of north American history.

Nov. 20, 2009

24、印第安的翅膀 **The Wings of the Indians**

It is you who have found the weight of life
the deity who for awarding your achievements
endows you the spirits of birds
The dreams and clouds fall to the ground

Tears and pitfalls are born in the air
Wind and feather are born in the wind
To fight for formidable opponents with axe as flag
You are not the species of the earth
Seeding and harvest are done in the sky
The deity got you back to heaven
leaving you the seeds of freedom
With flying loyalty
you inject the clouds with a soul

Oct 29, 2009

25、科罗拉多

Colorado

The cherished dreams of the Indian ancestors
are frozen into an altar
like an axe with bloody curse
stabs into the heart of North America
engraving the uneven history
on the clouds and fogs
Hence, the primary pains in life
sends out the ever torching light
Ever since, the earth has become
the genuine source of light
and the world will no longer be soaked in
mere pains and happiness

Nov. 6, 2009

26、胡德雪山的秘密

The Secret of Mount Hood

Mount Hood once had no secret
The Indians believe that a mountain with no secret
is not a genuinely divine mount
They came to the foot of the mountain
the mountain god admitted these killed vagrants

With sacred leaves in hands
I looked up at you
the lonesome Mount Hood
The numerous magic divine mountains
kept in ancestors' scriptures

on my homeland
became blurt in my eyes

It is said you keep snowy the year round
to set a height of coldness
Yet for me
you have frozen a bloody secret
to forget the disaster in the childhood
You want to make use of a nation's vanishing wisdom
to build an ever-glittering scene
along the west shore of the Pacific Ocean

Nov. 5, 2009

27、印第安神熊 The Sacred Indian Bear

I saw at the museum
a sacred bear of the Indians
that died unnaturally
I don't know whether a dead bear can be regarded as divine
I only clearly remember that *Zhyge Alu*
the divine ancestor of the *Yi* people
also died unnaturally
so did the broken-winged divine colt

Upon the unnatural death
the Indians and my divine deity
have constantly being experienced
I started to realize
the meaning for me to live in this world

Nov. 6, 2009

28、Phoenix grand 宾馆 Phoenix Grand Hotel

Is this the big silver bird
that has created silver and the fame
more precious than silver

I started to dream beneath the bird wings
the sacred beast of the Indians smiling to me
my folk people and I flying together

my woman giving birth in the air
my oxen and sheep wandering in clouds
my children growing horns
I being left in the wooden hut
to live forever in cold fire

I resided in Phoenix Grand Hotel
on a common afternoon
many common afternoons have passed in my life
only on this very afternoon
the disastrous memory in my mind recurred
I started to feel lucky that
I have lived with birds in the mountain
for as many as 18 years
At awakening, the birds are pecking the autumn leaves

Nov. 1, 2009

29、斧头 **Axe**

I exchanged axe with you
I dreamed of you, the Indian chief,
you led your tribe to slaughter
innocent people of another tribe
with the axe you use to cut woods

My old axe
in the hands of my ancestors
once cut the heads of innocent folk people as well
Let's exchange axes
Let the bloody tool
witness our friendship
and become the presents we exchange
at the moment of awakening from the dream
Don't pass the nightmare of fratricide
to our descendants

Nov. 5, 2009

30、在尤金，我没有见到印第安人 **At Eugene, I Saw No Indians**

Where have you hidden yourself?

I've come afar
to visit our common divine spirit
In the streets of Eugene
I found no old traces of you
At the campus of Oregon University
I didn't see you, with love
have you turned into the dense forests
along the Pacific Ocean
or the waterfalls in forests
whether you've wandered away with Coyote
after naming this land
or travelling at the bottom of the Columbia River
at the invitation of Salmons

Yet I saw the flying eagle quill
the deer with 9-branched horns
wandering lonely in the dark woods
I saw the falling leaves drifting at dawn
I saw the floating clouds evanishing

Nov. 10, 2009

31、绝育 Sterilization

To wipe out a race completely
many inhuman acts are needed
In 1960s, upon the sister of a Native American poet
an energetic lively woman
a delivery was turned into a sterilization surgery
the great reproducing power of one more Indian woman
was extinct

In fact
in the history of civilization for hundreds of years
the game of slaughtering Indians has never ended
so I felt happy for her
this Indian woman is given
another opportunity to give birth
Unexpectedly

Nov. 12, 2009

A Brief Introduction to the Poet and the Translator

The poet:

Aku Wuwu (1964-) is a Yi Chinese, a poet writing in both Yi native tongue and Chinese language, a literary critic, and a professor at Southwest University for Nationalities, Sichuan Province, P. R. China. He has published more than 300 poems in Chinese and international periodicals. His books *Stream in Winter* (1994) and *Tiger's Traces* (1998) are the first collections of poetry ever written in modern Yi. He has published four books of poetry in Chinese, *Go beyond the Boundaries of Witches* (1995), *The Selected Poetry of Aku Wuwu* (2004), *The Appeal of Mississippi* (2008), *The Wizard's Voice* (2010).

Translator:

Wen Peihong (1969-), an associate professor of English language and literature at the College of Foreign Languages, Southwest University for Nationalities, P. R. China. She has a graduate degree in modern British and American literature from Sichuan University. Her research is primarily in the area of contemporary American ethnic literatures. She also works in translation. Her recent translations of *Winnie the Pooh* (2008) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (2009) have been published by Hunan Children's Publishing house in China. Two of her English translations of Aku's poems ("Crow" and "Garbage") have been published in the American literary periodical *Silk Road* in 2010.

The Academic Experience and Achievements of Aku Wuwu (Qingchun Luo)

Professor Aku Wuwu (1964-), with the Chinese Name Qingchun Luo, a Yi-poet and poetic critic, was born in Mianning County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, PRC. He graduated from Southwest University for Nationalities with a BA in China's Minority Nationalities Literature. He is now the vice dean of the College of Yi Nationality Studies of SWUN, and a tutor of MA candidates. He is the member of the *Association of Chinese Writers*, the Vice-President of the *Youth Union of Sichuan Province*, the Director of *The Sichuan Comparative Literature Association*, and the Vice Secretary of the *Yi-Studies Association*.

Professor Aku Wuwu has published more than 300 poems written in both Yi native tongue and Han language in some leading literary journals and newspapers, i.e. *Liangshan Daily* (Yi language version), *Liangshan Art* (Yi-language version), *Poetry*, and *Stars*. *The Stream in Winter*, the first collection of poetry written in modern Yi-language, and *The Tiger's Track*, the first collection of narrative poetry ever written in modern Yi language in modern Yi literary history. were published in 1994 and 1998 respectively. The publication of these two collections established his status as the herald of modern Yi literature written in Yi native tongue. Another two collections of poetry written in Chinese, *Go Beyond the Boundary of Witches*, and *The Selected Poetry of Aku Wuwu*, were published in 1995 and 2004 respectively. His literary achievements are introduced in such prestigious academic works as *The Literary History of Yi-Nationality*, and *An Introduction to the Literature of Yi-Nationality*. He is honored as the "Originator of Yi Modern Poetry". Some of his poems are included in the textbooks for primary school and university students. About 10 of his poems, including the most influential poem in Yi native tongue, "Calling Back a Child's Spirit", have been translated into English and published in American literary journals. A special website of his poetry and related study is to be established very soon by the experts of the Department of East Asian Language and Literature, at Ohio State University.

In the mean time, Professor Aku Wuwu is also an influential literary critic. He has published 38 research papers in many leading journals of China's minority nationalities literature, i.e., *The Study of Ethnic Literature* and *Minority Nationalities' Literature*. Besides, he has published five academic works, including the well-known *Dialogue between Soul's---The Poetics of China's Contemporary Minority Nationalities Poetry Written in Chinese*. He coined several noticeable literary terms, i.e., "the Second Mother Tongue", "the Second Chinese Language," and "Cultural Hybrid", etc. which provided unique theoretical perspective for the study of China's Minority People's Literature. Aku Wuwu was invited to visit and give lectures in

Russia in 2004 and is to visit the USA in April 2005.

Professor Aku Wuwu was twice awarded the “Prize for Sichuan Minority Nationalities Literature” in 1992 and 2001. He was honored as the “Sichuan’s Elitist with Outstanding Contribution” in 2002, and chosen as the “Candidate of Initiators in Academic Fields in Sichuan Province” in 2004.

Mother Tongue: Persistence in Vanishing
-----**An Interview with Yi Poet Aku Wuwu**

Time: March 23, 2005

Place: “Mother Tongue Bar”, Chengdu, Sichuan Province, P. R. China

Interviewee: Aku Wuwu

Interviewer: Wen Peihong

Aku Wuwu (1964--), an influential Yi poet and poetic critic, is to give lectures in the USA in April 2005. At the eve of his departure, I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to translate some of his poems into English, in the consideration of enabling the American reader to better appreciate the charming quality of his poetry, and to appreciate his national consciousness and international vision. In the course of translating, I was often deeply moved by Aku's strong sense of mother tongue, great anxiety about his nationality, strikingly unusual primitive images, and unique artistic temperament. Recent years of doing research on American minority people's literature made me figure out some common characteristics of Aku's poetry and ethnic minorities American poetry. Thus, I got the idea of interviewing Aku Wuwu. I really appreciate that he could accept my request.

The interview was made at the “Mother Tongue Bar”, Chengdu, China on Mar. 23, 2005. Aku Wuwu recalled his unique bilingual (Yi and Chinese) life experience, his profound view on writing in mother tongue, his great anxiety over the loss of mother tongue among many of his Yi folk people, and his endeavor to solve this crisis. Aku Wuwu introduced the intellectual background for him to coin such terms as “Second Mother Tongue”, “Second Chinese”, and “Cultural Hybrid”. He made a comprehensive remark on contemporary China's minority people's literature, and its status in Chinese literature as a whole. All of this, undoubtedly, will serve as precious references for the reader to appreciate and understand contemporary China's minority people's bilingual poetry writing.

The interview was done in Chinese. And the present draft was recorded and translated into English by myself.

-----Wen Peihong, the interviewer and the
translator

Wen: Thanks so much for accepting my interview. I'll read this statement from your poem: "The chain of my names, from 'Apkup Vyt Vy' to 'Aku Wuwu', then to 'Luo Qingchun' is much rusted." Whom do you think yourself are subconsciously? Do you often ask yourself: "Who am I"? Which name would you prefer the others to refer you to? For me, I am somewhat puzzled. Would you please tell me how I should address you—Professor Luo, or Wuwu?

Aku: I could never have thought you would start with this question. To speak the truth, I also frequently asked myself: "Who am I, indeed?" "Luo Qingchuan" or "Aku Wuwu", or "Apkup Vyt Vy"? But since my life unavoidably encountered with Chinese language, the two names got related. A family name with double syllables is common among the Yi people. For instance, in my Yi name, "Aku" is the family name; "Wuwu" is the given name. What matters here is that the name is read and written in Yi language. You know, to name a baby in its mother tongue is very natural and should be perfectly justified. In Yi language, "Aku" has its origin, and "Wuwu" can also be explained. But later, my life was changed and I no longer stayed in the linguistic context of "Apkup Vyt Vy". Now, when I return to my village, my folk people know nothing about "Luo Qingchun". They only know "Apkup Vyt Vy". Later, it was unavoidable to appear a "Luo Qingchun", for my life must go on in the direction of "Luo Qingchun". In the Chinese language context, I must adjust myself to the new cultural environment, must be reformed by the new civilization, which contained a long process of re-naming myself and being named by the others. I gradually migrated from the world of first mother tongue-Yi language to the "Second Mother Tongue"—Chinese. On the first day of my enrollment into primary school, I was named as "Luo Qingchun" by a professor from Peking Union Medical College Hospital who came to my hometown to provide medical assistance.

Wen: Do you still remember your first reaction upon "Luo Qingchun"?

Aku: At first, I would not respond to it spontaneously. I was not sensitive to "Luo Qingchun". Just like a person who just started to learn English. You called him "John", but he would not react. Gradually, he would be able to develop the sense of language and identify with the new name. I imagined that my first reaction to "Luo Qingchun" would just be like this. Later, in the circle of my classmates and teachers, I am addressed as "Luo Qingchun", but when I return to the countryside, my folk people only know "Apkup Vyt Vy".

Wen: As your life is advancing in the direction of "Luo Qingchun", does it mean that you are farther and farther from "Apkup Vyt Vy"?

Aku: It would be like that for an ordinary people. But as a writer, I have the strong desire for and the capability of self-reflection on my own life experience. I was trained to write about the spiritual retrospect and contemplation of the past life into poetry. This is a reviewing of the past, and also an advancing forward. I'll not only

identify with “Luo Qingchun” self-consciously, but also persist in “Apkup Vyt Vy”, striving to absorb Yi and Chinese wisdom, to whole-heartedly experience the unique bi-lingual life.

Wen: “Both...and...” not “either...or...”?

Aku: Now, I can not be “either...or...” You can clearly see the journey of my heart, and that of my life. The only fortunate thing for me is that though having lived in the world of “Luo Qingchun”, I have never forgotten “Apkup Vyt Vy”. In the meantime, I have a strong sense of responsibility and an inner calling to pursue a mission in life as Luo Qingchun. Just between the two roles, two names, I get inexhaustible passion for artistic creation. If I were only Luo Qingchun, and lost the ability to read and write in my mother tongue, my writing would be another kind of expression. But I am still capable of thinking, reading, and writing in mother tongue, I can travel between two worlds, two languages, two cultures, and two nationalities’ spiritual worlds, with no more concern. With one more language, I gain one more way of living. I feel very fortunate about it. I’ll never blindly follow like sheep either role. I indulge in great anxiety, great embarrassment, broad-minded tolerance, and extreme unconventionalism.

Wen: As a bilingual poet, you’ve composed a lot of poetry both in Yi language and Chinese language. You know that the readership of literature in Yi language, especially Yi poetry, is very small compared with that in Chinese. Besides, most of the prized minority writers’ works are written in Chinese, for example, Alai’s “Red Poppies: A Novel of Tibet” was originally written in Chinese, not in Tibetan. Why do you still persist in writing Yi poetry against such a background? What does mother tongue signify in your eyes?

Aku: You are right that ethnic writers writing in Chinese have larger readership compared with those who write in the first mother tongue. But here I want to emphasize only one point: it is our mother tongue that has given us the consciousness of life, engendered early civilization, and conferred dignity to us as human beings. The present generation is not entitled to lose or to discard the mother tongue, which is still systematic and soundly functioning in naming. Nobody is entitled to do so. As for its readership, and how much influence it will exert, that will be another issue. I have been bathed in the wisdom of mother tongue. It has moved me numerous times. It cultivated me. The start and destiny of my life journey will never change the fact that I am named and shaped by my mother tongue. All of this is still functioning and effective in my body. I have the strong desire for expression and writing. So resolutely I write in mother tongue. For me, an intellectual with strong self-consciousness of nationality and history, the choice of mother tongue is obligatory. But the problem is, for many minority nationalities, the writing in mother tongue is shrinking, and for some it is even on the brink of dying. Against such a background, the contemporary writing in ethnic people’s mother tongue has profound historical

significance and pressing need. Persistence in mother tongue is a form of respect, preservation, and inheriting of civilization. Writing in mother tongue is a kind of salvation! Therefore, I write in mother tongue, not intending to pursue fame or profit, but being driven by the cultural conscience of an intellectual. In my generation, I am still capable of thinking and writing about the world I know. Why should I give up? Even though my offspring can no longer use Yi language to narrate story or express emotion, let me be the last one who can do that. The terminal point, by no means, should be in the generation of my grandparents, nor of my own generation. The inheritance and innovation in mother tongue writing, signifies the same in its civilization system, reservation of its spiritual resource and rebirth of spiritual life.

Wen: For many years you have lived in a big city where mainstream Chinese language and culture dominate, how do you preserve the acuity of wit in mother tongue and character?

Aku: I did this in various ways. First, persevere in reading Yi language classics; second, returning to my folk people in vacations, so as to be close to my folk, and to my mother tongue; third, converse and communicate with my colleagues and students; fourth, persist in writing in Yi. I preserve my mother tongue ability through all these means.

Wen: As for mother tongue, I read the following from your writing: "One morning, my son was reading in perfect Chinese mandarin, which astonished me, a member of an ethnic group rich in proverbs. One such saying goes like this: a child is closer to truth! I suddenly realized that my son's mother tongue is different from mine! Who should be blamed? The people are the same, but the language is different; or the language is the same, but people are different; or both language and people are different? With whom shall I turn to for all this!" So when you suddenly realized that your son's mother tongue is different from yours, what was your feeling? Did you feel happy or sad? Would you consciously develop his mother tongue capability? And tell him that you are an offspring of Yi people, so you should learn Yi language and know your own cultural roots?" Just like many Chinese immigrants in America, they insist on their children to go to Chinese school to learn the mother tongue and Chinese culture, so as to keep cultural contact with the mother nationality.

Aku: Naturally, I would feel sad. I cannot guarantee that my son can preserve or reach my level in Yi language. But I'll let him know that the whole world is a big family, and every nationality is an inseparable member of the family, to let him know that our ancestors have created glorious ancient civilization, and to let him have enough confidence to believe that being a Yi is a great glory. We must educate them to not only identify with the nationality, but also be blended with the age and society. We shall not isolate ourselves; and at the same time, not lose the nationality and local foundation. As for his capability in Yi language, it is indeed a question. So I am prepared to submit a proposal: to set up two classes of Yi language in Beijing and

Chengdu, to let the Yi children living in cities have the opportunity to learn their mother tongue. I regard it to be a dynamic cultural protection, according with the sense of scientific development.

Wen: Do you think that they will show interest in it? Do you think that it is really necessary? And have you ever thought of the possibility?

Aku: The obstacle lies not in the kids, but in the adults. Many people believe that it will be enough for the children to learn Chinese, English, and Olympic math well. It is typical pragmatic sense of education. This sense has harmed several generations, and now it is the time to do some change. Our country is making new series of educational policies. We should clearly know that the ultimate goal of education is not pragmatic, but passing down the civilization. The civilization transferring of a region, a country, a nationality, and an age, depends on the contribution of every individual. Under the pressure of material shortage, many of us just regard education as a means of pursuing wealth; eager for quick rich and instant benefit. They have forgotten that education is a means of gaining the consciousness of civilization. To do such a thing with no recent benefit must not be easy, but still I want to have a try. And here I want to appeal to all the people in the world who are experiencing the same as Yi people: Save our mother tongue, and save our children!

Wen: According to your estimation, how many Yi children are there in Beijing and Chengdu altogether?

Aku: About 2 or 3 hundred, including the children of school age or in kindergarten.

Wen: I am afraid that most of the children have completely lost their mother tongue ability.

Aku: It is true, over 90% have. My proposal, in fact, is an idea of dynamic protection of a nationality's civilization. Now, we receive education for everyday needs. Then what will we do when we have enough to eat and to clothe? We must protect the product of civilization, so as to create new civilization. Now, many westerners are reflecting on the mistakes they have made beyond redemption. We must try our best to protect the civilization. Everybody should start to act in our own lives, including our teaching methods. We shall also appeal the case to more people. I do this not for economic benefits. A utilitarian has no interest in doing such a "foolish" thing, for he cannot make profits from it.

Wen: I noticed that the poems you composed in 1993 and 1994 are quite special in contents and style.

Aku: I attended in advanced studies at Peking University at that time.

Wen: Then those poems were mainly composed in Peking University.

Aku: Yes. I came from the countryside, but now I live in the city. My writing is done in the city, including those in Yi language. While living in the university, in the city, I trace back and imagine the past country life, with a comparative perspective in retrospect. At the moment, I don't feel the lack of writing materials. Just the opposite, I still have so much to express, and to record. I didn't leave the country until the age of 18, and I have never broken away from it. That is the reason why I can write in Yi language. I feel very lucky that I majored in Yi language and literature as a college student. Naturally, I owe quite a lot to my forerunners who made it possible that Yi language and literature became part of higher education system. In addition, I am fortunate to get to know various western literary theories since 19th century. Especially while at Peking University, I started to be influenced by French Symbolism and Anglo-American modernism.

Wen: As a scholar, you coined such terms as “Second Mother Tongue”, “Second Chinese”, and “Cultural Hybrid”. Would you please tell me the background for when you coined these terms?

Aku: All of this was not due to flighty imagination, but related to my years of writing Yi and Chinese poetry, and teaching and doing research on minority ethnic literature. For a college teacher, creative writing alone is not enough. I needed to do theoretical research. Gradually, based on literary study, I probed into the spiritual tendency and cultural destiny of the 55 minority nationalities in China. I thus discovered some universal problems and started to think about how to solve them. Take Yi nationality as an example. I found that many of my folk people of the next generation, even some of those of my own generation, have lost their mother tongue capability. But I cannot refuse to identify with them. They are my kinsmen, and very dear close relatives. They cannot speak Yi language but I cannot say they are not Yi people. But there is always a subtle estrangement between us, which embarrasses us. Whenever I recollect such a condition, I think of “Second Mother Tongue”. They encountered Chinese and got the ability of living on Chinese language, which is different from mine. But I can never deny their nationality origin. In accordance with blood origin and nationality origin, Yi language would be the mother tongue of those of my folk who can no longer read and write in Yi language. But now, the fact is that they can no longer speak and write this language, and can no longer live in the Yi linguistic context. And this inspired in me the desire for denomination. As an in-ignorable term in the studies of minority ethnic literature, “second mother tongue” plays its unique role.

The coinage of the “Second Chinese language” is related to the above situation. When I studied those minority nationalities, I figured out that no matter whether he knows his mother tongue or not, he cannot avoid carrying on the aesthetical ideal and thought way of his won nationality. I realized the subtle relationship between language and thought way. They have their own discourse way, cognitive way to

narrate story and to express emotion, which is different from those Han Chinese writers who grew up in single Chinese culture. When faced with the same story, same situation, they will be different in their cognitive angle, the usage of language, and diction. Among all the differences, except for individual differences, there are also common differences as a nationality. Because of different nationalities, you'll speak Chinese in different manners. To press further, that is due to their national character, local color, the different thought way and value system. For instance, Alai adopted "Tibetan Chinese" in his novel, and Bajiu Wuga used "Yi Chinese". And this is the "Second Chinese" of minority nationalities writers.

Wen: Just like Chinglish (Chinese English spoken by many Chinese). And when did you coin these terms?

Aku: In about 1995 to 1997.

Wen: And how about "Cultural Hybrid"?

Aku: Today, China's ethnic writers can no longer write against a single cultural background. Besides absorbing traditional culture, wisdom, and religious views, they have also received good education in modern language, and have absorbed the Chinese culture from ancient times to modern times. All of this as a whole has penetrated into the cultural roots and aesthetic combination, including myself. My background of literary writing is multiple, only that my spiritual stand is forever rooted in my own nationality. I have given a detailed analysis of this term in a separate essay.

Wen: Your stance is firm, but the methods are various.

Aku: Yes, the methods are various, and the intellectual structure is diverse. So, today's minority ethnic literature is in an age of "cultural hybrid". For example, in Alai's *Red Poppies*, what you read out is not only the historical scene and ethnic fantasy. Besides those strange, odd, mysterious objects, you can also figure out Latin American magic realism, French surrealism and other imported artistic concepts and spiritual elements. Only that his narrative discourse, cultural images and materials came from Tibet.

Many people said that Yi poetry is hard to get published, and the readers really don't care about them. For all of this, I responded: I know all of this. I persevered in those hard days. Now I no longer have to rely on author's remuneration to make a living, thus I should persevere. I remember that many years ago I told myself, "I must protect my mother tongue well with a healthy body and soul." And I wish to make dialogue with the rest of the world. Though my writing language is Yi, my artistic concept is open to the world.

Wen: Many people who emphasize the importance of nationality would cite the

famous saying that, “the more national it is, and the more international it is.” As an ethnic writer, you must have your own understanding of this statement, right?

Aku: It can be both right and wrong.

Wen: Why do you say it is wrong in some ways?

Aku: For it seems to separate a certain nationality from the rest of the world. In fact, the whole world is an inseparable integrity. In the depth of humanity, the whole world is related with each other. In this world, any nationality that has survived the time should be qualified to speak to the world, to speak what it wants to say in its mother tongue. We are inseparable particle of the whole world. The primitive existence was already well arranged by the Divine. What we need is but mutual reorganization and mutual respect. In the past, the westerners made a mistake that is Occidental Centralism. They believed the Oriental was barbarous. But, along with the mutual frequent visit between the easterners and the westerners, the westerners gradually recognize the long--standing oriental civilization. And on the other hand, this statement is justified because its original focus is cultural localism, nationalism, individualism, and diversity.

Wen: In the poem “Garbage”, in an ironic and sad tone, you express your inner fury and bitterness. Much of the customs and folkways have been thrown away as rubbish. In your eyes, who turned them into rubbish? What is your responsibility as ethnic writer with conscience?

Aku: A living style, a civilization, as it appeared, can not avoid the fate of being deconstructed, being eliminated through selection, being filtrated, and even being annihilated, which I think accords with the Natural Law. Take the Yi’s fate and survival into consideration. Its civilization is on the brink of historical crisis.

Wen: You mean the crisis appeared within, not from the outside?

Aku: Yes. The culture itself can no longer survive in this way. In this rapidly changing age, Yi’s original spiritual way, living style, and thought way seem to be imbecile as never before. If we cannot surpass, we will just die out in history.

Wen: Do you also refer to Yi language?

Aku: It might refer to Yi language, or perhaps to many other languages and cultures which have perished or are perishing. When faced with this critical crisis, every one of us should reflect the sticking point of our nationality. In this new age, an intellectual with strong ethnic self-consciousness should do all he can to preserve them while criticizing, and to criticize while preserving. This is the first layer of meaning. On the other hand, the so-called “garbage” may not be garbage, but only is

treated like garbage. And this is the issue of the combat between the strong and the weak. The equality in the sense of natural human life is, many times, a lie. Species are like this. Culture is also like this. And now a kind of climbing plant called wisteria, is spreading from Yunnan to Sichuan. Wherever it grows, no other plants can grow. Human culture is the same. Stricken and pressed by the powerful culture, some tiny society and primitive culture of minority nationalities will be quenched. Faced with this, scholars of humanities should introspect our own action.

Wen: In your essay “Permanent Home: On Ethnic Writing in Mother Tongue”, you point out the correct attitude is persistence in vanishing. Would you please explain the necessity and possibility of persistence?

Aku: This is a poignant question. Well, “vanishing” might be a reality, but “persistence” is an attitude. Shall we just let it vanish from our eyesight, or bring in something new to reform it? Input some new elements, and make traditional culture split in our body, and thus we get rebirth. Theoretically it is possible. But persistence does not equal to be conservative. As a scholar of humanity, he mustn’t tolerate his folk culture to be destroyed barbarically. Otherwise, he will just succumb to new barbarism. If he turns a blind eye to it, that will be the ignorance of a contemporary intellectual! We must speak on our own stand.

You must have been aware that I am an idealist. But just because of the shortage of this kind of idealism, my existence has its value.

Wen: So last Christmas Day you gave a speech on “Ethnic Writing in Mother Tongue” and read your Yi poem “Conjuring the Spirit” at Chengdu Municipal Library. Later a member of the audience made comments on the Internet, saying that you are lonely, but respectable, and he felt sorry for you.

Aku: That man is quite humane.

Wen: In fact, it is an invisible war. Just as what Alphonse Daudet describes in his short story “The Last Lesson”. What an agony we will feel for the vanishing of a language! Sometimes, I feel puzzled by the word “Chinese”. When the word “Chinese” is translated back into Chinese, it is either “Han Yu”, or “Zhong Wen”, which for us, have no distinction.

Aku: Your puzzlement explains your respect for the ethnic cultures. In fact, there is no difference between “Han Yu” and “Zhong Wen”. Because the minority people also regard both “Han Yu” and “Zhong Wen” as their own language. Only people like me care about the subtle shades of meaning.

Wen: The Chinese language spoken by minority people is distinctively different from that spoken by Han Chinese people. You can immediately figure it out.

Aku: In my poetry, you can also figure out some expressions, which are not acceptable for Chinese grammatical rules. I will use Yi language when thinking in Chinese cannot overcome the obstacles of expression.

Wen: In which language do you think and speak in everyday life?

Aku: Both. One is Yi language, the other is Chinese mandarin.

Wen: There is a permanent theme in Chinese American literature, i.e., “between worlds”: the embarrassments brought by the two identities as a born Chinese and an American citizen. As an Yi Chinese, do you suffer the similar embarrassments?

Aku: No, I don’t think so. In history, the concept of “China” (Zhong Guo) is identified not only by Chinese people living in central plains (comprising the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River), but also by the ambient ethnic Chinese. I think that China has done very well in the affairs of ethnic minorities. This can be explained by the fact that in history Han and ethnic Chinese have been mixed with each other. The sense of unification of the country does not only exist among the Han people, but also among the ethnic minorities. For example, the ethnic minority rulers in Yuan Dynasty and Qing Dynasty also have the political ideal of the unification of the country.

Wen: So, naturally, you don’t have any puzzlement about an Yi Chinese.

Aku: You are right. But after all, it is a reality that the narration in Yi mother tongue is at the brink of dying out. And this will bring about ineffable anxiety, embarrassment, and pressure. Those who are bilingual like me shoulder similar pressure. However, just under this kind of dilemma and pressure, I can have an impulse to ponder upon the problem. If I lived an easy life, I would never bother thinking about it at all.

Wen: Did you live a very difficult life ten years ago?

Aku: Yea. I just started to work then, and life was extremely difficult. The salary was not enough for me to live well. Half of my salary has been spent on buying books. With the accumulation of the past 20 years, I now have a considerable collection of books in my own academic field.

Wen: Have you ever thought of being a poet in the past days? And how have your childhood and juvenile days affected your writing?

Aku: When I was a child, the only goal was to leave the countryside. The ultimate goal of receiving education was to enroll in college, and to alter the fate through attending various examinations. I had seen such forerunners who had succeeded in

achieving this goal. And I started writing poetry in high school. Before entering the university, I could understand and speak Yi language, but could not read and write in this language. I started to study Yi language when I entered university in 1982. Since I had good foundation, I learned with facility. My family has exerted great influence on my growing up. My mother is a far-sighted woman, and is very respected by my folk people. My big sister graduated from middle school, and she influenced me most. My family has a good tradition of hard-working and industry. The local teachers often make me, the first college student from my village, as an example for the later generation children to follow. I entered primary school at very young age. You know, many children started primary education when they were teenagers. The majority in my village is Yi people, and there are also Han and Tibetan Chinese. We know each other's languages. So, from childhood, I live in a minor multi-cultural environment.

Wen: Would you please give me a brief introduction to China's ethnic minority literature, and its status in contemporary literature as a whole?

Aku: This is an examination question I gave to my MA students. The concept "ethnic minority literature" only appeared after the founding of the People's Republic of China. It is still a very young subject. But this literary phenomenon can be traced back to many years ago in history. In history, there have been ethnic minority writers who wrote in Chinese, and also those who wrote in their mother tongue since the age of The Three Kingdoms, Jin Dynasty, and Southern and Northern Dynasties. For instance, Yi people have their own ancient literary theories. Bimo is sacerdotal Yi and educationist. You can get quite a lot of classic literary theories from his writings. But as an academic field "ethnic minority literature" did not appear until the foundation of New China. Directed by the policy of equality of all Chinese ethnic communities and national unity, the literary journal "Ethnic Minorities Literature" was founded by China's Writers Association, for the publication of the works of minority ethnic writers. And at the same time, in every regional autonomous region, including Liang Shan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, there are similar literary journals.

The development of China's ethnic minorities literature till today can be roughly divided into 4 stages:

First stage: The writers spanned the old and the new age. They started writing in old China. In that special times, they expressed their happiness and gratitude to Chairman Mao and the Communist Party for bringing new life to them. Then there appeared no real ethnic literature in the Cultural Revolution.

Second stage: A new age came after the Third Plenum of 11th Central Committee of CPC (Communist Party of China), (1978), China started to reform and open up to the outside world (since 1980). The ethnic minorities literature started to clear up the source of moral character; and radically reform by striking at the root. It started to return to the normal road of literary aesthetics, and no longer was the subordinate of politics, which is extremely important. This was an age of recuperation to the national history and culture.

Third stage: The age of 1990s is an age of experiment. The writers also carry on a shade of ethnic color. It is mainly a reflection on ethnic culture. I am between the second and the third stages.

Fourth stage: The generation in 21st century is a transcending age. They speak in the name of individual, not in a nationality. They are very young, and have lost more and more national character. They started writing in 1990s. Although they have the ethnic identity, they know very little about their own nationality. They are going farther and farther in their poetry and fiction writing. There isn't any obvious distinction between the 3rd and the 4th generation.

Wen: They are minority people, but they don't write about their people. And the national character is more and more scarce in their writings. Do you think it is gratifying or lamentable?

Aku: It is quite odd that some ethnic minority writers would avoid admitting their minority identity, and even feel offended if you declare his identity.

Wen: Then he will have no difference from Han Chinese writers.

Aku: Despite this, you can figure the different local color. And national character is related to the local color. While the national character is fading away, the local color is strengthened. Han Chinese writers do not have the regional background, which a minority writer has. According to the natural law, it is possible for those ethnic minority writers to return in the future. History always progresses like a spire. When they go too far away from their origin, they will be farther and farther from their roots, and their life is to become weaker and weaker. And this will awaken these writers to return. Without the mother tongue, the distinction between the ethnic minority writings, in the future, will mainly be the difference between various regions. And the distinction between different ethnic groups will not be less obvious. Except for the minority communities in Tibet, XinJiang, and Inner Mongolia Autonomous regions, which have their unique natural, cultural, and environmental features, all the other minority people's literatures will have fewer ethnic character in the future.

Wen: Are all your students ethnic minority people?

Aku: There are over 10 ethnic minority groups from Southwestern China. Of course, there are also Han Chinese students.

Wen: How do you think of their ethnic consciousness?

Aku: It depends on individuals. Those from countryside generally have stronger sense, but those from cities have few difference. For instance, a Bai Chinese inherits very little from his nationality and thus becomes an ordinary Chinese. But after

receiving higher education, he will pay more attention to the folk resources.

Wen: With the invitation of the experts at Ohio State University, you are to give lectures in the U.S. Would you please tell me your prospect for this academic visit?

Aku: I shall transfer what I know about Yi literature and culture to the American students as accurately as possible. Of course, I want to take this opportunity to know more about the ethnic minority writers writing in mother tongue in the USA. And here, I'll express my gratitude to Dr. Mark Bender, who has done so much to make my visit possible. And I can do nothing else but to work hard to thank the experts at Ohio State University.