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THE ROLE OF MENTORS IN THE LIFE AND POETRY OF HUANG JINGREN

This article is devoted to the one of the most notable representatives of traditional Chinese poetry of the Qing dynasty – Huang Jingren (1749–1783). In Huang's collected works, over 300 poems are devoted to his friends, and a tenth of them – to those whom he considered his mentors. Most often, those were people of an older age, who became his teachers and advisors at the same time. Some patronized him, providing opportunity to work with them; with others, he would seek advice on matters of poetry and discuss poems. Over the years, a few of them became not only the young poet's senior companions, but also his friends. The poems devoted to such people are rich in social and historical background, and replete with the poet's rather hard personal life experience, his thoughts and feelings. They do not only evolve the scenery of social and intellectual life in the midst of the Qianlong Emperor's reign before readers' eyes, but also provide a better understanding of the poet's personality and the distinctness of his worldview.

Throughout his rather short life, Huang Jingren had a few friend mentors, who appreciated his talent, respected him and wished to help. Shao Qitao played one of the most important roles in Huang's life. He was not the first to discover Huang's talent, but he helped this talent evolve and move in the right direction. Another teacher and a person who predetermined a lot of Huang's life was Zhu Yun, who served as an education supervisor (*xueshi*) in the Anhui province. One of the most famous Qing poets, Yuan Mei should also be mentioned. He was a man of great talent, who founded his own poetry school and wrote «*Suiyuan Shihua* or Poetry Talks from Sui Garden». Despite the disparity in age (almost 33 years), they were still friends. Yuan Mei admired the young talent, whereas Huang venerated the Teacher.

All these senior mentors played a certain role in the poet's life and work and many poems in the «*Liangdangxuan*» collection are devoted to them.

Keywords: Chinese literature, poetry of the Qing dynasty, Huang Jingren, Yuan Mei, Shao Qitao, Zhu Yun.

Huang Jingren (1749–1783) is one of the most notable representatives of traditional Chinese poetry of the Qing dynasty. His works stand distinguished among the many schools and movements that were widespread in the 18th century. Huang Jingren's poetry was, on the one hand, full of vivid emotion, simplicity and naturalness, and on the other, it shows the poet's unremitting toil and vast erudition. In the eyes of his contemporaries and people of succeeding generations, Huang Jingren was a withdrawn, proud and solitary person – that is exactly the image communicated throughout his poetry. Yu Dafu wrote: «If we are to speak of a genuine poet among the authors of the Qianlong and Jiaqing Emperors' reign who wrote lines imbued with sorrow wherein each character conveyed torments – it is, beyond any doubt, Huang Zhongze» (see: [Huang Baoshu, 1986. P. 256]). Indeed, the poems we have studied are imbued with grief and pain; they are written by a very lonely person. In real life, however, despite his melancholy and sorrow, Huang never distanced himself from people; during his studies abroad or during his service, he always had many friends who appealed to some

degree the anguishes of his mind induced by his pessimistic character, and the lingering diseases that pursued the poet since childhood. In Huang's collected works, over 300 poems are devoted to his friends, and a tenth of them – to those whom he considered his mentors. Most often, those were people of an older age, who became his teachers and advisors at the same time. Some patronized him, providing opportunity to work with them; with others, he would seek advice on matters of poetry and discuss poems. Over the years, a few of them became not only the young poet's senior companions, but also his friends.

The poems devoted to such people are rich in social and historical background, and replete with the poet's rather hard personal life experience, his thoughts and feelings. They do not only evolve the scenery of social and intellectual life in the midst of the Qianlong Emperor's reign before readers' eyes, but also provide a better understanding of the poet's personality and the distinctness of his worldview.

First, we should mention Huang's closest friends – the people who understood and accepted him. The poet was but a child when he had to face a grievous aspect of life: his father died when he was 4, his grandfather – when he was 12, his grandmother – when he was 13, and when Huang turned 16, his only elder brother passed away. The poet-to-be was left alone with his mother. He dreamed of a friend, of someone who would lend a helping hand in the time of need (even if it was merely moral help, which was also important), of someone to share his feelings with; he dreamed of recognition of his talent by others, as well. And although at times his poems communicate a feeling of sheer loneliness and non-recognition of his work, the real situation was quite different. Even in the poet's lifetime, there were already many people engrossed in his poetry, admiring it.

Throughout his rather short life, Huang Jingren had a few friend mentors, who appreciated his talent, respected him and wished to help. Speaking of Huang's mentors, it is impossible not to mention Shao Qitao. This man played one of the most important roles in Huang's life. He was not the first to discover Huang's talent, but he helped his talent evolve and move in the right direction. Shao belonged to those Teachers with a capital «T», who care not only for the level of students' success, but also for their mental and physical state. For Huang who lost his father in his early childhood, Shao was an embodiment of fatherly love. Many times the poet felt deeply for his death; he commemorated his Teacher every year. In the foreword to a collection of his poems, Huang wrote: «In the Bingrong year (1766), Shao Qitao¹ of Changshou was heading the Longcheng Academy; he sympathized with me, who wrote poems in solitude, sympathized that I had no teacher and that I had not yet completed studies. He became a patient and ingenious mentor to me. I, Jingren, met someone who accepted me understandingly – therefore I stayed with him, never leaving anywhere» [Liangdangxuan ji, 1998. P. 11] For several months, Huang was travelling along with his mentor, and afterwards, when the latter was appointed to the position of the head of the Longcheng Academy in Wujing, the young poet went with him. Later, the poet's childhood friend Hong Liangji wrote that Master Shao used to call them «Two Talents».

In his poem «Inducing to Study – The Poem Gift for Huang Hanyong», Shao Qitao wrote about Huang [Liangdangxuan ji, 1998. P. 640]:

Huang Hanyong
At the age of 19
Was renowned at the academy,
He walked with his head held high, glancing around,
Was comely in appearance,
Indeed, a talent fit for the court service.
He is a lingzhi and an orchid flourishing at the steps of a palace.
His family, though, was poor, and he was made an orphan at an early age,
He often ailed,

¹ Shao Qitao became a *jinshi* during the Qianlong Emperor's reign, was elected to the post of *shujishi* (one of the best scholars who earned a *jinshi* degree and stayed at the Hanlin Academy), after retirement returned to his home city and became the head teacher in Changzhou.

He was of a distinguished character –
 Therefore he was sad.
 The poems he was writing
 Were tragic and wistful.

Shao Qitao and Huang Zhongze shared love to nature, which manifested itself in numerous joint travels to various scenic places. Thus, for example, in the spring of 1767, they visited the Tongguan-shan Mountain, where Shao wrote in one of his poems [Liangdangxuan ji, 1998. P. 641]:

Huang is a unique person, like a precious jade,
 He is full of aspirations, unlike others.
 He is not concerned about mundane things,
 The only thing that moves him is creation of poems to express sorrow.
 Since his very birth, awake or sleeping, he adored nature.
 He did not like that there were no places enveloped in haze in the village.
 This spring, he happened to come to the foot of the Tongguan Mountain,
 Forthwith he began to climb up, forgetting even to eat.

Upon retirement, Shao Qitao lived at home never leaving for long – only to Suzhou and Changzhou; as these trips did not take a lot of time. Shao's poetry was exquisite; his calligraphy imitated the finest specimen of antiquity – that of Wang Xizhi; his bianwen stories were also outstanding. This was the amazing teacher Huang and his friend Hong Liangji had. No wonder that Huang, not even twenty years of age at the time, was already writing excellent poems, whereas Hong became famous for his bianwen stories – for Shao Qitao himself helped, taught and mentored them. Therewith, Shao was by nature neglectful of commonplace trifles. During cold wintertime, he liked to take off his shoes and sit at the hearth. Whenever guests came by, he began looking for his shoes and could not find them. Then he would grab the first available pair of shoes, often confusing what shoe to put on what foot. The guests would chaff, and he, upon noticing the mistake, would also start laughing. Because of his nearsightedness, he used to read books lifting them right to his nose – therefore, his nose and face were often stained with ink, which did not seem to bother him.

In 1768, Shao Qitao died at the age of 52. After Shao's death, Huang fell into grief. Human life began to seem too evanescent to him. Afterwards, Huang tried to visit his Teacher's tomb every year.

Many poems are devoted to Teacher Shao; one of the most famous is «Leaving dazhong Shao in Jinling»:

I am three thousand li, for five years already, away from home,
 Being in different places, we wander in the same way like a broken stem,
 Even when there is someone to meet you, I still feel sheer apathy.
 And even when it is not yet time to part, I still feel sorrow.
 You were passing Yan City ², and now you are in Wu City ³,
 I parted with you both at the Gaoqiao Bridge ⁴ and at the Banqiao Bridge ⁵.
 Lamenting sound of jingles hastes and hurries,
 Hazy willows outside the White Gates ⁶ [dolefully] rustle at night.

Huang wrote this poem already after Shao's death – five years later. As it is known, Huang travelled a lot during these years in order to sooth the pain of loss with fresh experiences; he compared himself to a broken stem that was torn away from its roots and was now wandering around the world. A broken stem often symbolizes a wanderer impelled to roam far and near without a permanent shelter. Likewise, Huang visited many cities over the years that passed since the death of his friend, but nothing could soothe the grief. No wonder he remembers «The Ode on Parting» by Jiang Yan, which

² Yan – Beijing.

³ Wu – Suzhou.

⁴ In Suzhou.

⁵ In Yangzhou.

⁶ Jinling.

contains the lines: «The greatest sorrow can only be induced by parting». Even the beautiful landscape of Jinling surrounded by numerous willows enveloped in a light haze at sunset (in «The Old Yuefu», there are lines describing this scene: «Slowly walking out of the White Gates, Among poplars and willows, a raven may be hiding») cannot dispel the sorrow.

Yet another teacher and a person who predetermined a lot of Huang's life was Zhu Yun (1729–1781), who served as an education supervisor (*xueshi*) in the Anhui province. In 1771, he invited well-known people to revise antique texts. Zhu Yun heard of Huang and sent him an invitation letter inviting Hong Liangji as well. *Xueshi* wrote a letter to his friends: «I've just come to Jiangnan and already hired two young men – Huang and Hong – their talents are like two ancient precious swords Longquan and Taie that can defeat ten thousand men!» As Hong Liangji wrote in a note to the poem «At the Outpost Seeing Master Huang to the Capital City»: «You (Huang Jingren) and I have long been acquainted with master Sihe ⁷, he called us a monkey and a crane». Zhu Yun himself said that «Zhongze is like a wild crane amidst blithesome clouds». It is evident how much Zhu Yun appreciated Huang's and Hong's talents, while they, in turn, honored him as a Teacher. For some time, Huang had served under Zhu Yun's command. Even after moving to Beijing in the north, he kept in touch with his former mentor, more so because the latter also lived in Beijing during that period. In 1781, Zhu Yun died at the age of 53; Huang and his best friend Hong Liangji mourned him at the Xingshan monastery. There are many poems devoted to Zhu Yun as well; one of them is also introduced in the cycle «At the Evening of Life Recollecting Friends» [Liangdangxuan ji, 1998. P. 648]:

He was exiled, punished for a minor fault, from the state of Chenfang to live in this time,
What affairs in the world of men are worth wasting his spiritual energies on:
The Manting pavilion for celestials beings on the Wuyishan Mountain will not wait any longer.
Eight hundred bereaved scholars need it!

Chenfang is a country of celestial beings, to whom Huang compares Zhu Yun. There is a legend, according to which Du Fu, when he was 10, met a boy with a crane on his hat. The boy said he was a celestial and used to live on a star where patrons of scholars dwelled, but was exiled to Earth. Thereafter, Du Fu found a stone with gold characters engraved on it: «The King of poets is in the country of Chenfang...». Thus, Huang compares his Teacher to the famous poet of the Tang dynasty.

The third line also suggests that Huang sees Zhu Yun as a celestial being who descended to Earth from heaven. The Manting pavilion was built on a mountain by a hermit Wu Yi. Then it turned to the Rainbow Bridge that connected the Heaven and the Earth. All locals gathered there for a feast, during which master Yi said: «You are all my grandchildren». In the last line, Huang mentions a famous politician and poet of the Tang dynasty, Li Deyu, who often helped poor scholars make a career, but later was demoted and exiled to Hainan in Yazhou. A poem was composed about him:

Eight hundred bereaved scholars are shedding tears together,
Having turned their heads, they are looking to the parts of Yazhou.

Huang compares Zhu Yun to Li Deyu because Zhu Yun also often patronized young men of a low rank who came from poor families – that is why they streamed to him from all over the county.

At last, we should mention one more person whose name is often remembered when it comes to Huang. Yuan Mei (1716–1797) is probably the most famous Qing poet, a man of a great talent, who founded his own poetry school and wrote the famous «Suiyuan Shihua or Poetry Talks from Sui Garden». Despite the disparity in age (almost 33 years), they were still friends. Yuan Mei admired the young talent, whereas Huang venerated the Teacher. In «At the evening of life recollecting friends», there is a quatrain devoted to Yuan Mei:

During joyous meetings, we write poems and odes, both playful and complying with the canons,

Belated interest helped to create your own house with a garden out of an official lodging.
Jianye ⁸ and Lin'an ⁹ are joined by a river,

⁷ Second name (*hao*) of Zhu Yun.

⁸ Jianye – Jiangning (now Nanjing).

⁹ Lin'an – Hangzhou.

Every year I come here for the blossom of apricots.

Yuan Mei, who in youth, it would seem, was all set for a brilliant career, suddenly decided to leave the post of the county head that awaited him. He said that «his decision was caused not by offence that he was not appointed to the post of the Gaoyu Region Head (as his friends thought), but by his discontent with the service: a county head is obliged to please higher officials, to which he had no aptness, but not to help common people overcome the difficulties of life, which he could do well» [Yuan Mei, 2003. P. 8]. Besides, the poet wished to be free and have time, mood and environment which would invite contemplation and creativity. Yuan Mei purchased land near the Sui garden on the Xiaocangshan Hill in Nanjing and engaged in setting up the estate and gardening. According to O. Fishman, «formerly, this garden belonged to Cao Yin (1658–1712), a scholar and a man of letters, who served as a textile commissioner in Nanjing in the years of the Kangxi Emperor's reign. Cao Yin was a grandfather of Cao Xueqin, the author of the famous novel 'Dream of the Red Chamber', and Yuan Mei, relying on an assertion of Cao Xueqin's friend, alleged proudly that Suiyuan was the park described in the 'Dream of the Red Chamber' as Daguan Yuan» (see: [Yuan Mei, 2003. P. 9]). Over time, Suiyuan became a meeting-place for men of letters, where Yuan Mei used to gather his friends to talk and discuss poetry over wine, and have literary classes and read poems. It was the Suiyuan estate where Huang Jingren spent the winter months of 1774–1775; he used to come here from time to time to visit his senior friend.

All the talents of this generation look up to this great sage,

Heaven gave him this place – indeed, it is perfect.

His poems written under inspiration will live in the ages to come,

He was an official for only ten years that flew past.

For a time he was holding a post at 'The Jade Hall Yutang'¹⁰, records of his surname are kept there.

He secluded himself in Goulou¹¹ to become a holy celestial being.

A renowned man¹² can be compared to a general,

Whose destiny will be more fortunate than that of Fenyang (Guo Ziyi)?

This poem («Granting *taishi*¹³ to Yuan Jianzhai»¹⁴) shows how highly Huang Jingren revered Yuan Mei. He was also fond of Yuan's work – free and natural, not bound by any limitations, as well as of his attitude towards life; for Yuan spent only 10 years in the public service, whereupon he lived blithely and in perfect harmony with himself for over 40 years. Huang, on the contrary, throughout his entire life had to strive, to no avail, for the ideal imposed by society of that time – he repeatedly took examinations and likewise repeatedly failed them. Therefore, he had no luck in making a career, which he needed so much due to the money and conventionalities (for only a person who made a career of a public official could be considered successful) rather than for reasons of personal aptness and inclination.

Goulou mentioned by Huang here is not an indication of a specific place where Yuan Mei lived. This is a symbol of a place where there is a remedy to achieve immortality – cinnabar dan. Chapter «Biographies. 42. Ge Hong» of «The History of Jin» tells that «(Ge Hong) learned that in Jiaozhi (Vietnam), there was a *cinnabar dan* and asked to be transferred to Goulou». In his poem, Huang likens the Suiyuan garden to a place where one can attain immortality.

Moreover, Huang compares Yuan Mei to the famous Tang general Guo Ziyi, who was a ruler of the Fenyang County. At the time of the An Lushan's rebellion, he was a *jiedushi*¹⁵ in the Shoufang district

¹⁰ Yutang is the name of a public official administration. Renzong of Song once called the Hanlin Academy «The Jade Hall Yutang». Since that time, it became the Academy's special name. Yuan Mei, upon earning a *jinshi* degree, was a member of Hanlin.

¹¹ Goulou is the name of a county, now at the border with Vietnam.

¹² Renowned man is a person who is already renowned but has not yet made a career. People known for their unconventional behavior, who did not pay attention to minor details, were also often called that.

¹³ A member of the Hanlin Academy.

¹⁴ Yuan Mei's hao (second name).

¹⁵ A district ruler.

of Beijing. In Hebei, he defeated Shi Siming; and thereafter he became deputy commander-in-chief in Hedong (Shanxi). Heading an army comprised of Hui people, Guo Ziyi reconquered Chang'an and Luoyang, and was subsequently promoted and became a *zhongshuling*¹⁶. Later he became a ruler of the Fenyang District. He had numerous offspring, fame gained through feats, wealth and longevity. Among famous generals, he is an exceptional person. Likewise, Yuan Mei's destiny was exceptional for renowned men who had not made a public official career.

Thus, we have listed Huang Jingren's foremost senior mentors, who played a certain role in the poet's life and work and to whom many poems in the «Liangdangxuan» collection are devoted.

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РОЛЬ НАСТАВНИКОВ В ЖИЗНИ И ПОЭЗИИ ХУАН ЦЗИНЖЭНЯ

Статья посвящена одному из самых выдающихся представителей традиционной китайской поэзии эпохи Цин – Хуан Цзинжэню (1749–1783). В сборнике произведений Хуана более 300 стихотворений адресовано его друзьям, и одна десятая из них – тем, кого он сам считал своими наставниками. Как правило, это были люди старше него, которые были учителями и советниками в одном лице. Одни оказывали ему покровительство, дав возможность работать у них, с другими он мог советоваться по поводу поэзии, обсуждать стихотворения. Некоторые из них с годами стали не просто старшими товарищами для молодого поэта, но и его друзьями. Стихотворения, посвященные таким людям, богаты социально-историческим контекстом и наполнены непростым личным жизненным опытом поэта и его мыслями и чувствами. Они не только разворачивают перед читателем картину жизни общества и интеллигенции времен середины правления Цяньлуна, но и помогают лучше понять личность поэта и особый характер его мироощущения.

Все старшие наставники Хуан Цзинжэня играли определенную роль в жизни и творчестве поэта. Им посвящено большое количество стихотворений в сборнике «Ляндансюань».

Ключевые слова: китайская литература, поэзия эпохи Цин, Хуан Цзинжэнь, Юань Мэй, Шао Цитао, Чжу Юнь.

¹⁶ Chief secretary of the State Chancellery.

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