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ON THE ALBUM OF SCENES OF HUANGSHAN ATTRIBUTED TO HONGREN

(HR=Hongren, XYC=Xiao Yuncong)

(S,S.) One of most famous works of Anhui School of ptg is album of SCenes of Huangshan, w. seals of Hongren. (Actually set of 7 albums of 10 ptgs each, w. 8th album of inscriptions.) These are two leaves. As work of central artist of Anhui School, depicting central subject of school, extremely important for our understanding of Anhui school painting. Also, most complete early series of pictures of Huangshan that we have. Has been universally accepted as genuine work of Hongren. However, I have long suspected that it was not really by him; and while living in Peking in fall of 1982, had chance to study 9 leaves of the album in originals on exhibition. Confirmed my earlier suspicions, based on reproductions: that ptgs not by Hongren at all. Later, after climbing Huangshan and studying them some more, I came to second conclusion: that they are by his older contemporary Xiao Yuncong. Today I will try to show first that evidence for its being a work of HR not reliable; and then that evidence (stylistic) for its being work of XYC, on the contrary, is overwhelming. In saying this I am not changing the quality or the importance of the album in any way; the paintings are unchanged. I am only clear up the question of its authorship, and give the proper credit to XYC. (trying to)

(S,S.) The two artists had distinct styles. Here, two works by HR: LS in Honolulu, Palace Mus. Peking. Style: linear, geometricized, w/o color; structural; concerned w. space and mass.

(S,S.) Typical works by XYC, by contrast, use color; contain figures; are less structurally strong in composition; retain more of trad. of Wen Cheng-ming and other Suchou ptrs; and in mood and effect, exhibit more of light whimsy, less of the seriousness, even austerity, that HR represents. (Leaf from album in Cleveland Mus. dtd. 1668; sec'n of handscroll in Los Angeles County Mus. dtd. 1669.)

(S,S.) But: the two artists were contemporaries, working in same place; natural that they would have points of style in common, overlap in certain of their works. HR said to have learned from XYC; in later years, XYC affected by HR's style. XYC sometimes (as in ptg in Freer Gal. dtd. 1658) moves into HR's stylistic territory; and HR sometimes uses some color, works w. flatter forms, or otherwise comes closer to XYC, as in this sec'n of handscroll dtd. 1661 (Sumitomo So: how to distinguish them? If we try to question the attribution of some work ascribed to one of them and suggest it's really by the other, on the basis of style, as I'm doing, someone can always reply: yes, but why couldn't XYC have decided to do a ptg in HR's manner, or HR in XYC's? And of course this is a possibility.

(S,S) Let me use an analogy: here are two works by Huang Pin-hung and Fu Pao-shih. Contemporaries, knew each other, sometimes working in same place. But they have individual,

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distinctive styles. Now, if we found a work in style of FPS but with seal of HPH, this could be a case in which Huang deliberately worked in Fu's style. (Not likely, but theoretically possible.) But we would have to be very sure that Huang's seal is reliable before accepting the ptg as by him. And this would be especially true if Huang's ptgs had become much more admired & valuable than Fu's. In case of HR & XYC, HR's ptgs have been much more valuable than Xiao's since their own time; always a temptation to increase value of XYC work by attrib. it to HR.

(S,S) Only real evidence for attrib. Beijing album of Huangshan scenes to HR, apart from colophons (which can easily be switched from one album to another) are seals on the ptgs; and these, as I will now try to show, are unreliable. HR seems to have used at least two small, round seals reading Hongren. Both are found on leaves of album now in Nelson Gal., Kansas City, dtd. 1664 (last dtd work, ptd only 13 days before death.) I will call these Type A and Type B. In this one, Type A, jen character written w. vertical lines; verticals predominate.

(S ←) This seal found also on LS in Freer Gal., others.

(S ←) Detail of Freer ptg: seal.

(S,S) Other, Type B: curvilinear; lines of jen character of equal length, and curve to conform to round outline of seal. This one also seen on a number of ^{other} reliable works, such as:

(→ S) SEveral leaves in 1657 album (whereabouts unknown) that HR painted in Nanking. HERE is whole leaf;

(→ S) Here is detail of seal. These two seals, Types A & B, seem to match up on reliable works of Hongren.

(S,S) A third round seal found on this undtd LS of Mt. Wu-i 武夷 in Fukien; I know only from old reproduction, and can't judge authenticity, but looks good. Left leg of jen character shorter than right; otherwise like Type B.

(→ S) SEal on Beijing album of Huangshan scenes doesn't agree with any of these; so far as I know, can't be matched with any seal on any other Hongren work. Seems midway bet. Types A and B in design: characters curved slightly, but not enough to conform with round outline of seal.

Also: no other case (known to me) in which same seal put on every leaf of album (70 leaves!) without, moreover, any inscription by artist.

Seals are thus not reliable evidence for its being a work by HR; and inscriptions identifying him as artist could of course be switched from one album to another, may not have been attached to this album originally. So: only real basis for deciding who painted it is style; and style, as I'll try to show, points strongly to XYC as artist.

I will show a series of slides to demonstrate this: that characteristic features of style to be seen in leaves of Beijing album can be paralleled closely in XYC's works, not in Hongren's.

(→ S) Here is leaf representing 雲谷寺 Cloud-Valley

Temple from Beijing Album V (i.e. fifth in series of seven albums. I am grateful to Mr. Yang Xin of Palace Mus. for information on organization of these albums.) Pointed peaks ptd in "Mi Style", w. horizontal tien, heavy clouds. HR never attempted this style, to my knowledge; against the whole direction of his style. 點

(S ←) XYC, by contrast, did it several times. Here is sec'n of handscroll in Vannotti Col., Lugano, Switzerland, dtd. 1663. Same peaks, same clouds. (Minor differences, but much closer than any correspondences we could find in works of other artists.)

(S, S) Another example, sec'n of XYC handscroll from same year in Palace Mus., Beijing; compare to leaf in Album III of Beijing Huangshan album, representing 蓮華庵 Lotus-flower Retreat. Heavy clouds around this. Also:

(→S) Leaf in Beijing album IV representing 天門峰 Heavenly Gate Peak: heavily-outlined bands of fog twist around peaks. Never seen in HR's ptgs; but:

(S ←) A feature often found in XYC's ptgs. Here, sec'n of handscroll by him in private collection in Hong Kong.

(S, S) Strange, unnaturally curling mists are found in several leaves of Beijing album; distinctive feature. Here, leaf rep. 天都峰 Heavenly Citadel Peak in Album II. Bands of fog sometimes end in knobby, mushroom-like curls--

(S ←) Best paralleled in works of XYC, such as this sec'n of handscroll in Hong Kong. Nothing remotely like this to be seen in works by HR.

(S, S) Several leaves of Beijing album (here, 仙鏡洞 in Album III and 大悲頂 in Album IV) employ another odd way of treating mountain slopes, distantly based on style of Wang Meng: texture strokes (ts'un) curve, earth forms twist, to give strange effect of animation. HR never ptd this way; 王蒙 皴法

(→S) XYC did, as in this leaf from a published album dtd. 1668, which he inscribes as being "in manner of Wang Meng."

The practice of imitating a wide variety of old styles was more characteristic of XYC than of HR, whose models were quite limited, and not so important to his ptgs. That is, HR may occasionally work in the manner of some old master, but his style is not so much altered. XYC, by contrast, regularly (S, S) worked in old manners, changing his style markedly. In 1648 he ptd series of landscapes depicting scenery of T'ai-p'ing region, which were printed by woodblock; these are two leaves, inscribed as in manners of Wang Meng and Kuo Hsi. Also these represented real places, he did them all in old styles, acc. to his own inscriptions. This is a practice somewhat antithetical to normal aim of representing real appearance of scenery; and it agrees with whole program of Beijing album of Huangshan scenery, in which real places are similarly represented in variety of manners.

(→S) Another manner seen in some leaves of Beijing album is system of shading with ink-wash within parallel interior contour lines, to give some relief-like appearance to forms. Never done by HR, but:

(Oil Pool 油潭
from Album II)

S ← Frequently seen in XYC's works, such as this sec'n of published handscroll (old Shanghai publication.)

S, S. Feature seen in several leaves of Beijing album (here, 散華塢 Scattered Flowers Valley and 九龍潭, Nine Dragons Falls in Album VI) in Album II is placing of row of treetops, with varied foliage types, along bottom edge of picture. Has effect of elevating scene, suggesting that more lies below its lower boundary.

S ← This is device frequently used by XYC. Here, sec'n of handscroll by him, pub. Peking 1959. Hongren will put pine trees at base of composition, but not such a row of various kinds of trees.

S ← Another, sec'n of handscroll from old reproduction book (Shanghai, 1910.) Note also figures: we'll come to these later.

S, S. XYC likes to scatter a variety of trees, all simply drawn with schematic foliage patterns, around his compositions for effect of differentiation, richness. Left, sec'n from undtd. handscroll, Peking pub. 1959 (note figures, once more); right, leaf rep. 朱砂泉 Red Gravel Spring from Beijing album VI.

S, S. In other ptgs, artist of Beijing album repeats simple pattern of pine trees, all identical, with rows of needles pointing upward like rakes, or brushes. (喝石居, 掀雲牖, both from Album II.)

S ← These are also typical of XYC's style. He was, as I said before, an artist who worked out a repertory of schemata or conventions, or adopted them from earlier ptg, and used them w/o trying much to adjust them to nature--

S, S. Perhaps most characteristic of XYC's ptgs are the simply-drawn, blocky little figures that people his ptgs. Often faceless, or w. only dots for eyes & mouth. These are details from ptg in Freer Gal. dtd. 1658 (left); from handscroll in Los Angeles County Mus. dtd. 1669 (right). Such figures never seen in HR's ptgs (which seldom have any figures); but appear frequently in Beijing album.

S, S. Here, for instance, are details from 油潭 Oil Pond and 朱砂泉 Red Gravel Spring, both in Album II. Typical XYC figures. Note also artist's fondness for color: robes of figures typically colored red. Hair tied in knots in back; often walk with staffs. → XYC has strong tendency to work with type-forms, repeated from one ptg to next. These figures, to be seen in many leaves of Beijing album, should alone betray the hand of XYC, even w/o the landscape settings.

Not individualized;

S, S. I know of only ^{a few} three ptgs by Hongren with figures in them: leaf from early collective (合作) album, known from old publication; figure of monk, in ptg formerly in Victoria Contag ~~album~~ collection;

S, S and landscape in Freer Gal., shown before, in which man sits in t'ing-tzu 亭子 in lower right, w. servant standing beside him.

(S,S) Details from former Contag, Freer paintings. Figures not like those in Beijing album, or in XYC's works. This alone, together with frequency of figures in leaves of Beijing album, should raise doubts about whether HR ptd it.

(S,S) In coloring, XYC likes to work within range of cool blue and green tones, blended w. ink, and to enliven this combination w. areas of pale red-brown, as on tree trunks, and touches of brighter red, as on the foliage of some trees and on the figures. Trees are typically drawn in naive way, w. clusters of circles for leaves. These are details from Los Angeles handscroll of 1669. HR seldom colors his ptgs, never in this way.

(S,S) Here is 覺庵 Enlightenment Lodge from Beijing Album II. Exactly same manner of coloring. Build-up of mts, w. shaded folds, also typical of XYC's style.

By now, I hope I have established to everyone's satisfaction that in all the features of style where XYC's and HR's paintings differ, the Beijing album agrees closely with XYC. There are virtually no significant stylistic affinities, by contrast, w. Hongren's ptgs.

Now, I want to turn from these smaller points of style to some basic observations about the two artists' fundamental methods of rendering mass and space, and of portraying natural scenery.

(S,S) Hongren, as I said at beginning, is concerned with conveying sense of massiveness, even monumentality, in his landscape forms, w/in limitations of his linear drawing. Constructs his pictures out of clearly scaled forms, small to large. Simpler, clearly articulated compositions, made up of larger units, are typical of him. (Honolulu, Pe'king Palace Mus. ptgs.)

(S,S) When he attempts more complex compositions, smaller forms are integrated into larger units, so that whole effect is never simple piling-up of small forms, or composition built up simply by additive method. Space is defined sometimes as pockets or recesses between landscape masses, bounded by sheer cliffs.

(S,S) His outlines tend to be long, slightly fluctuating and wavering; define huge rocky masses that are characteristic of Huangshan scenery. (Ptg in Shanghai Museum; another, private col., Hong Kong, "Done below Biyun Peak".) XYC's line drawing typically drier, not so continuous and fluid as this. 碧雲峰

(S,S) Hongren, even in his ptgs of quieter, non-impressive scenery, such as these (sec'n of 1661 handscroll in Sumitomo col. in Japan; album leaf in collective album prob. ptd in 1663) provides clear sense of ground plane, of flat-topped banks and plateaus, of space separating elements in depth--always keeps these clear. Not so in XYC's works.

(S,S) XYC, even when he is closest to HR (as in Freer LS of 1658), works w. flat forms, overlapping, w/o attempting any very convincing effects of space or 3-dimensional form. (Other: leaf from 1668 album.) XYC can paint cubic, flat-

topped masses, but doesn't try to go beyond that.

(S,S) flat-topped, platform-like forms zig-zagging oddly into distance belong to his repertory; here, sec'n of published handscroll, and 1648 landscape in Tientsin Mus. This odd form was common property of number of Anhui School artists, including Hongren, used by a number of them.

(S,S) Here is 白砂峯 White Gravel Ridge leaf from Beijing Album II: curious example of this elevated, zig-zagging form. Has no counterpart in real geology; imagined. Or, as simple variant of this, a zig-zag recession along a river, as in 橫坑 Level Gulley leaf of Beijing Album II. Something like this appears in early works of HR; but belongs more to XYC's compositional method, in mature years of two artists.

(S,S) XYC's inscription attached to Beijing album, dtd. 1665 (last two pages of four.) Praises album as work of Hongren; says he himself never went to Huangshan; too old to go now. But Hongren, he says, since his return from Fukien, has been living among peaks and cliffs, sleeping and eating among seas of clouds and fogs, and has absorbed all these into his mind.

(S,S) Beijing album now strikes me as work of someone who has never been to Huangshan. Artist can transmit certain simple features of Huangshan scenery, such as shape of rock oddly balanced on rock platform (飞来峰 Peak That Came Flying, from Album VI; cf. photo of real place). Features that allow identification of scenes, as in schematic pictures in guidebook.

(S,S) But this artist seems to have little sense of feeling of place, sense of breathtaking grandeur. Gives us only these highly schematic versions of famous sights. Here (right slide) 慈光寺 Tz'u-kuang Temple, from Album IV, with Tiendu Feng (Heavenly Citadel Peak) at right, and Taohua Feng (Peach-blossom Peak) at left. Like simplified version of standard woodblock-printed guidebook depiction, as seen in print from early 18th cent. book (left slide). Ptg. transmits no sense of real experience of place.

桃華峰

Ciguang

(S ←) Real scene: Tiendu Feng rises magnificently, towering over temple on one side;

(S ←) Taohua Feng on other side (seen from different angle.)

In October of 1982, after I had climbed Huangshan, spending three days among its peaks, returned to Beijing to study leaves of album further (still on exhib. at Gugong) and had revelation: that these were not ptgs by anyone who had ever been to Huangshan.

This is admittedly my weakest argument: subjective, unprovable. But I want to put it forth nevertheless, however subjective it may be, in addition to my other, firmer arguments, as another reason why I think Beijing album is by XYC, not by HR.

I believe that set of albums in Palace Museum, Beijing, w. spurious seals of Hongren, are really fine works by XYC,

probably based loosely on a series of album ptgs by Hongren. Inscription by XYZ dtd. 1665 attributing album to Hongren, along with other colophons presently accompanying Beijing album by Ch'eng Sui 程邃, Zha Shibiao 查士標, and others, must have been switched or transferred from genuine album by Hongren; these colophons seem perfectly genuine, and these writers would not have mistaken work by XYZ for work by Hongren. Seals of Hongren probably put on at same time colophons switched, by some earlier owner, in order to re-attribute the work to Hongren.

Probability that a genuine album by Hongren of scenes of Huangshan existed is strengthened by references in written records to such albums. No time to discuss these; references compiled in Chien-chiang tz'u-liao chi 漸江資料集. None can be conclusively matched with Beijing album. No information in any of them--only names and titles.

(S,S) Recently, two leaves from what I believe to be a genuine Hongren album of scenes of Huangshan appeared in auction in New York, now in private collection. Painted on silk, in ink with slight touches of light color. I don't claim that these are necessarily from the album that XYZ copied, or the album that the series of colophons originally were written for. Hongren may have done several albums of Huangshan scenery. My claim is only that these seem more acceptable as genuine works of the artist, and provide better evidence for how Hongren represented the scenes of Huangshan.

(S←) Insc. by late Wu Hu-fan 吳湖帆, famous Shanghai collector and connoisseur, dtd. 1942, state that these are genuine works by Hongren, that they were being "given" (= sold?) to a certain Han-pang 漢邦 whom I haven't identified, and that they are from a series of 16 Views of Huangshan. Don't know basis for his saying this, and haven't found any info. on whereabouts of remaining leaves. Would be grateful to anyone who can give me clues. I suspect that there were probably more than 16, since the two scenes these leaves depict aren't among really famous ones (or at least one of them isn't), prob. wouldn't have been included in series of only 16. Also suspect that these were probably among least interesting leaves of album. Nevertheless, they match up in important points of style, as well as in all-over method, with Hongren's paintings.

(S,S) Seals on these two leaves match exactly the Type B in examples I showed at the beginning.

煉丹臺

(S,S) One, Lien-tan T'ai or Refining Cinnabar Platform, renders towering cliff, flat-topped w. spaced outcroppings of rocks, trees. Drawn in long, fluid, sensitive line; sense of space in ravine at right, between nearest trees and farther peak.

(S,S) Contour drawing of rocky spire in left foreground resembles similar form in Shanghai Mus. ptg; and long, rhythmically fluctuating contour lines seem to come from same hand.

(S←) Treatment of distant peak, shaped w. "orchid-leaf vein"

ts'un (texture strokes), seen in other Hongren ptgs, such as this LS of 1658,

(S ←) Or this one, undated. Such mountain forms not to be seen in XYC's works.

(S, S) Here is version of same scene in Beijing album, perhaps based on this ptg or another one by Hongren. In leaf in Beijing album, landscape forms reduced to flat, playfully geometricized shapes; lose sense of natural form, together with sense of height, mass, grandeur. Artist treats pine trees as repeated convention, where Hongren, in leaf on silk, depicts them as individually varied, growing plants, however simplified.

(S, S) Other leaf represents 光明頂 Kuang-ming Ting or Shining Summit. Depicts profusion of pine trees that might seem superficially like repeated type-forms we have identified as elements in XYC's stylistic repertory.

(→ S) But again, comparison w. detail from one of leaves in Beijing album makes contrast. Artist of leaf on silk (who is, I believe, Hongren himself) is concerned w. giving vitality, interest to trees by varying their sizes and shapes, never slipping into heavy-handed repetitiveness of the other.

(S, S) The construction of the main mass in the Kuang-ming Ting leaf, w. horizontal plateaus receding, interspersed with vertically-rising, blocky boulders, has parallels in Hongren's works, e.g. this detail from upper part of LS dtd. 1663.

(S, S) And again, version of same scene in Beijing album reduces this to oddly lumpy, composite form, in which the only implication of depth is through one of XYC's typical, schematic zig-zag recessions. Different artistic mentality at work here, using dif. repertory of forms, but also inspired by quite different attitude toward representation of scenery in nature.

I hope I've persuaded most of you that the Beijing album cannot be from the hand of Hongren, but must be a work of XYC; and, as a work by Xiao, can be seen as one of his finest productions. Changing the attribution does not, of course, change the quality of the ptgs, which are in themselves quite attractive. It changes only our understanding of the ptgs, and removes them from consideration when we are trying to deal with the development and achievement of Hongren. On the other hand, they can now be added to the oeuvre of XYC, and we can try to date & place them w/in his development as artist.

Whether the recently-discovered two leaves on silk will be accepted generally as genuine works of Hongren (as I myself believe them to be), and whether other leaves from the same album will eventually come to light, are questions that must be left to the future. I will be grateful to my Chinese colleagues for advice on these points, and for criticisms and improvements of my paper.

Thank you.