

On Li Guang's Change in His Poetic Style and His Practice of "Learning for Self-cultivation and Academic Standards" before and after his Relegation

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Abstract: The poetic style before and after the relegation of Li Guang, a well-known minister of the Southern Song Dynasty, showed a relatively clear trajectory of change. Before relegation has a strong realistic pertinence. The themes of his poetry are the anxiety about the turmoil of state affairs and the belief in victory over the nomads. The style of his poems took on a vigorous, high-spirited and vehement look, which is closely associated with the general trend towards national salvation in the wake of the Jingkang Incident, where the Northern Song capital was besieged and sacked, as well as the "Sino - barbarian dichotomy" (華夷之辨) in the Confucian tradition. After relegation, Li Guang indulged in landscapes and books and history to relieve his grief. His poems mostly expressed rationality and interest in a leisurely life, but he did not lose his true quality of being bold and unconstrained. The key to the change in his poetic style is to practice "learning for self-cultivation and academic standards," to cultivate morality and self-development with the art of "inner sage," to penetrate the outer falsehood, and to stay calm and wait for mandates from the "outer king" to come.

Keywords: Li Guang; relegation; change in poetic style; "learning for self-cultivation and academic standards."

Notes on the contributor: ZHONG Heng is a postgraduate student at Lanzhou University with an academic interest in ancient Chinese literature.

Li Guang, a famous scholar in the Song Dynasty, served in the three reigns of Huizong (徽宗), Qinzong (欽宗) and Gaozong (高宗). In the early years of the Southern Song Dynasty, because of his opposition to peace negotiations, he was banished to the wilderness, where he drifted in the desolate mountains and oceans for 17 years but never regretted his decisions. He was praised as one of the "Four Honored Ministers of the Southern Song Dynasty" (南宋四名臣) for his upright words and deeds. Li Guang's life was full of ups and downs, and he experienced the vicissitudes of life during the transition of the two Song dynasties. The multifarious moods

expressed in his poems also underwent a relatively clear change, i. e. from liberality and profoundness to plainness and naturalness. It was his relegation and the “learning for self-cultivation and academic standards” he perceived through meditation during his exile that contributed to the change. Looking further, behind Li Guang’s relegation was the establishment of the national policy to advocate peace, and the debate on peace or war surrounding the establishment of the national policy not only created “political divisions among the scholar groups”, but also exerted a direct and profound influence on the caused the literary world of Nandu owing to the Nandu scholars “three-in-one” identity of “bureaucrats, scholars and men of letters” (QIAN Jianzhuang 2006: 231). Therefore, this paper collates the changes in Li Guang’s poetic style before and after his deportation, tracks the ups and downs of his life, and explores the changes in literary style and scholarly fashion in the early Southern Song Dynasty. Moreover, the paper demonstrates the features of the Southern Song Dynasty more clearly and clarifies the trajectory of the Nandu literature evolution.

1 Before Relegation: the Fervent Battle Song after the Jingkang (靖康) Incident

Toward the end of the Northern Song Dynasty, when “power and fortune were the axes of things” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16378), Li Guang continued the spirit of a scholar-official who would always “open his mouth to talk about the current affairs” (OUYANG Xiu 2001: 35) since the Qingli (慶曆) period, showing a strong realistic concern. In the sixth year of Xuanhe (宣和), Li Guang, disillusioned with the crafty sycophants in power who blocked freedom of speech, proposed “opening the gate to the public’s righteousness without concealing anything” and criticized some bureaucrats in the court for “blindly following the ugly rules, feasting and favoring money, and obsequious flattering trend” (ZENG Zaozhuang 2006: 44), so he was demoted to Yangshuo (陽朔). After Emperor Qinzong ascended the throne, Li Guang once again accused Cai Jing (蔡京) and others of “appointing frivolous people as officials” and “disgracing the Holy Dynasty” (ZENG Zaozhuang 2006: 46). During the siege, when Li Gang was elbowed out by Geng Nanzhong, Li Guang came forward to defend him, wording gently that Geng Nanzhong (耿南仲) “sees something that might not make sense” (ZENG Zaozhuang 2006: 76). Regarding the gloomy political situation at this time, Li Guang did not associate himself with evil people, and expressed his will in such words as “I’m always obstinate in my life and dare to brave cornered beasts” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16377), which shows his upright and open nature and temperament.

This kind of uprightness was more vividly expressed after the Jingkang Incident. Since the Jin soldiers marched south, the two emperors were captured and sent north as prisoners, the Central Plain was occupied, and the court of the Song Dynasty ran to the south. The literati now saw that their illusion of peace and stability was smashed by iron hoofs, and their hearts were full of confusion and humiliation. For Li Guang and other patriots, the confusion prompted them to think about how to stop the turmoil and give peace back to the people. The humiliation stimulated their deep hatred for the Jin (金) invaders. In the magnificent epic of resisting aggression, Li Guang condensed a strong sense of social responsibility and historical mission, and he used his poetry brush to play a high-pitched tone of the times.

On the one hand, Li Guang expressed his anxiety about the turmoil of state affairs in his poems. For instance, Li Guang was saddened by “the Central Plain is trapped in war, and the state of the ceremony is fallen

to aliens.” At the same time, he showed that his concern over his country would never wane even after his death. “I worry about my country, which shall not change even when I pass away.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16380). The sincerity of his loyalty made Li Guang write to the court to express his opinions about state affairs frequently and his eagerness for the court to accept his loyal words: “Each time he thinks of state affairs, he can’t help getting outraged and lamenting.” (LU You 1979: 10) Not only did he “hate injustice like poison and dare to step forward when discussing matters of importance” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16381), he also said: “Our country’s resurgence must rely on you, gentlemen, so don’t be afraid to reply to our emperor in righteous words” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16420) and “Don’t forget to frequently cross the threshold of the royal court in times of danger. When our emperor is a saint, don’t worry too much about his dignity sometimes” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16419) to persuade his friends, hoping that they would not care about personal gains and losses to make suggestions for national security.

At the same time, Li Guang, full of anger, scolded the villains who were afraid to come forward and betrayed the country in the event of a national crisis. One of his poems, *Lamentable* (《可歎》), exposes all their ugly faces. It begins with “Why did Jinling fall in such a short period of time? The enemy soldiers burned our emperor’s palace” to usher in the current affairs background: “In November of the third year of Jianyan (建炎), the date of Xinwei (辛未), the Jin soldiers captured Jiankang City.” The following line, “The defending ministers, holding incense above their heads, led the people to bow and scrape and opened the city gates,” describes the shameless servile behaviors of the city guards after the fall of Jinling to the enemy. Confronted with a formidable enemy, many courtiers were “sitting and watching” and “surrendered to the barbarians”, which led to the tragedy of “The emperor’s guards of honor with flags and weapons had to go offshore, and the emperor’s edicts failed to be communicated smoothly”, forcing the emperor to put out to sea to escape. Then Li Guang accused warlords of bullying the people by “skinning and marrow sucking” to take forcible possession of the territory, instead of making any contribution to resisting the foreign aggression. “When the enemy comes, they protect their wives and children; when the enemy leaves, they claim to win a victory in the hope of being promoted.” It was these “power-abusing ministers and disobeying generals” that bred the miserable scene of “a myriad of white bones in the mountains and waters, and nine out of ten houses were empty now.” Conversely, these “urban foxes and temple rats” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16397) are vying for their associations in order to get promoted. The poem outlines the group portraits of the troubled times in the early years of Nandu, and reproduces the dirty behaviors of three types of country moths: civil courtiers who surrendered to the enemy and betrayed their country, self-respecting warlords because of their troops and villains who cling to the powerful. It is a vivid reflection of Li Guang’s strong sentiments for the country and loves for the people.

On the other hand, in his poems, Li Guang expressed his belief in victory sweeping away the aliens. Although he was a scholar, Li Guang made military exploits for the Southern Song Dynasty. In the third year of Jianyan, Li Guang guarded Xuancheng (宣城), where he rectified the troops. “The Jin soldiers were besieging the Majia Ferry, and the shire counties in the south were unable to resist them, but Li Guang strengthened the defense alone, so the Jin soldiers dared not invade.” (SHI Su 1986). In the fourth year of Jianyan, when Qi Fang (戚方) was besieging Xuancheng, Li Guang personally braved flying arrows and stones, and directly faced enemy soldiers with a spear. During the defense of the city, he made an agreement with his family: “The city may not hold. You should send for my dagger. I shall die, and you should kill yourselves as well, so we will

not be captured alive by the enemy.” (TUO Tuo 1977: 11339). It shows that Li Guang was already determined to die at this time, and his resolute feelings for his country at the price of his life are seen. When the enemy soldiers retreated, Li Guang recited the intense verse, “I am happy to see the peaceful atmosphere with the demon away, and I feel the mountains and rivers have restored their extraordinary vigor.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16413). In the third year of Shaoxing (紹興), Li Guang revisited Xuancheng and wrote a poem to recall the past events of “marching out at the emperor’s order in the morning” to protect the country and the people. The troops under his command were marching with soldier discipline: “No officers or soldiers made any noise by speaking loudly or knocking pans.” He even had a high-flown talk confidently: “Drive foxes and mice away from their dens with a smile and a few words, and defeat the bear-like enemy generals and troops of the so-called ‘pride of heaven’ (the Huns)” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16447). Not only could he eliminate the rogues with a smile and talk, but he wanted to lead a formidable army of tigers and wolves to conquer the barbarians in the north. Generous and heroic determination to win overflows between the lines.

However, when his passionate faith was destroyed by reality time and again, and when he saw that there was no hope to restore the Central Plain, he would inevitably have a sense of frustration that “I worry about our country, but my strength keeps letting me down” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16450). Li Guang’s misery and helplessness were even more evident in his elegies for Li Gang (李綱), the first Southern Song dynasty prime minister who scored a major victory against Jin troops during the Jingkang Incident. Elegiac verses like: “I heard suddenly the beam of the south snapped, and the Central Plain is still awaiting the return of the emperor in ceremonial attire.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16467), “Indignantly, I hold my sword in vain, but I clenched a fist in my unchanged loyalty” (LI Gang 2004: 1755) “I’m so loyal that I’ve frequently offered my advice, and I only regret that I can’t defend my country against the enemy’s invasion” (LI Gang 2004: 1756) are filled with national humiliation and unrequited ambition for his country.

The extremely strong realistic concern in Li Guang’s poems during this period is certainly closely related to his straightforward heart, but the influence of the era ethos of saving the nation and the country cannot be ignored. The change brought about by the Jingkang Incident represents the overthrow of Chinese land by the barbarians, and the stabbing pain in the minds of literati is far greater than the changes of dynasties of the Han regime in history. It traces back to the deep-rooted debate on and the distinction between Chinese and “barbarians” (華夷之辨) inside the heart of Chinese literati. *The Spring and Autumn Annals - Gongyang* (《春秋公羊傳》) puts forward the governance strategy of “China in on the Central Plain while barbarians stay on the remote outskirts” (HE Xiu 1998: 2297). *The Analects* (《論語》) also proposes a theory that “Even if the land of barbarians has a monarch but has no rituals, it is not as good as the Central Plain that has no monarch but respect rituals.” Huang Kan (皇侃) explained it as “to value Huaxia - the Central Kingdom but belittled the barbarians” (HE Yan 1937: 30). Nandu scholar Hu Anguo (胡安國) inherited this tradition. His *Biography of Hu’s Family in the Spring and Autumn Period* (《春秋胡氏傳》) “juxtaposes the debate on and distinction between Chinese and the barbarians with the three cardinal principles and heightens it to the level of the Dao of Heaven and the cardinal principles of justice” (JIANG Mei 2022: 33–34), which was very representative at the time. The humiliation of the country’s subjugation has not yet been avenged, and the Southern Song Dynasty, which symbolized the continuation of China, was in a state of precariousness, which uplifted the enthusiasm of the people in the country for saving the nation onto an unprecedented height.

Lu You(陸遊) recalled the words and deeds of the Nandu scholars he heard and saw in his childhood: “At that time, when talking to each other about state affairs, the scholars and officials would glare, clench their teeth, or cry bitterly, and everyone wished that he would rather die in support of the emperor.” (Lu You 1968: 194) Under such circumstances, the hermits who used to be tired of mundane affairs also came out of mountains and forests, eager to serve the country. For instance, Wang Zhongmin(王忠民), recorded in *History of the Song Dynasty: Hermitage Biography*(《宋史·隱逸傳》), “was indignant that the Jin people did not have any Dao, so he sent three petitions to the head of the Jin Kingdom to request the release of the two captured emperors” (TUO Tuo 1977: 13462). Chao Yuezhi(晁說之), who was living in seclusion in the Songshan Mountain, expressed his sincere loyalty to the state in such poetic lines as “With my little loyalty, I consider offering my advice; With thousands of blood and tear running, I kowtow to the heavenly palace gate” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 13803).

2 After Relegation: Joy of Drifting Unrestrained Amidst the Desolate Mountains and Oceans

Li Guang’s poetic style changed dramatically in his later years compared with the earlier days of Nandu. His fighting passion diminished and his interest in the indifferent and free mountains and forests increased gradually, with the turning point being the changes in life circumstances. According to *Song History*, in the eighth year of Shaoxing, Qin Hui(秦檜), getting the hint of the emperor, presided over the peace talks between Song and Jin. Li Guang opposed Qin Hui’s self-abolition of military power to seek peace with humiliation, accused him in the royal court of “stealing and abusing the state power and misleading the nation by guile” when Qin Hui was gathering adherents of his clique (TUO Tuo 1977: 11341–11342), and resigned immediately. After Li Guang retired from public life, persecutions from Qin Hui’s adherents came one after another. In the eleventh year of Shaoxing, Mo Qixie(萬俟卨) lodged an accusation against Li Guang, reporting that Li Guang “has grievances and is instigating people” in his hometown(LI Xinchuan 2003: 2680), so he was demoted to Tengzhou(藤州). In the fourteenth year of Shaoxing, “A certain Zhou from Tengzhou lured Li Guang to join him in writing poems and articles with sarcastic lines about Qin Hui and the peace talk. Zhou accumulated several such poems and articles and sent them to Qin Hui in secret.” (XU Mengshen 1987: 212). Therefore, Qin Hui demoted Li Guang again to Qiongzhou(瓊州). In the nineteenth year of Shaoxing, Lu Shengzhi(陸升之) disclosed that Li Guang was writing non-official history books, which led to Li Guang’s “no more promotion”; and his second son Li Mengjian(李孟堅) was also “removed from the official register and banished to Xiazhou(峽州) Prefecture where he was watched”(LI Xinchuan 2003: 3044). Li Xinchuan(李心傳) concluded that Qin Hui had caused Guang’s two sons to die in the places where they were deported and made the other three sons of Li Guang removed from the official register. “Li Guang’s homestead was all confiscated, and his whole family was broken up as well” (LI Xinchuan 2003: 3191).

Relegation brought Li Guang deep suffering, but he indulged himself in the mountains, hills, forests, and springs in order to eliminate the suffering damage to his spirit. Li Guang was banished to a deserted island in Hainan which “is not inhabited by humans, deprived of food or drink, or even medication” (SU Zhe 1990: 1126). While facing the cruel natural environment, he also had to endure the “dramatic spiritual strike” brought

about by the “two polar changes in life” (SHANG Yongliang 2004: 4). However, Li Guang did not become depressed, but took the initiative to explore the beauty of his exile life, trying his best to transfer his emotional fatigue and seeking peace of mind.

On the one hand, Li Guang entertained himself with landscapes and wrote about the breathtaking scenery and exotic objects south of the Five Ridges. In his term, the “exotic realms are described as much as in poetry” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16460). Sometimes he wrote, “The phoenix tail bamboo and betel leaves are dancing shadows, together with the fragrance-spreading ambergris and jasmine flowers” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16429), where he blended exotic betel nut and jasmine with leisurely feelings. Or he wrote, “The square pool is as clear as the blue sky, and the gushing waters turn around suddenly” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16384), depicting the waters and the clear running springs extending to the blue sky. Other lines like “winter flowers lean against the short fence, and scattered pine trees space tall bamboo groves” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16388) depict the scene of the tranquil village dwelling, or he “went with a walking stick to pay tribute to Su Shi’s image, where I stood still for a long time imagining his dashing life” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16400), to express the ease and contentment of exploring the historical sites of Su Dongpo (蘇軾). Accordingly, the aesthetic interests of Li Guang’s poetry also changed during this period. The bleak and deep lamentation has been reduced, increase in the joy of the mountains and forests in a light and leisurely manner, presenting a plain and natural artistic style.

On the other hand, Li Guang entertained himself with books and history, and he strengthened his character and improved his self-cultivation by means of studying the former sages. According to *Song History*, Li Guang “carried out literary deliberations historical examinations, feeling comfortable and at ease. He was over eighty years old, but his writing remained sharp and strong” (TUO Tuo 1977: 11342). “With the inkstone by the clear pond, I copy books till dawn creeps onto my window.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16393). “The millennium moth-eaten bamboo books help me forget my worries.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16454). “I’m still reading *The Book of Changes* (《易經》) when the dawn is at the window.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16424) all this constitutes a true portrayal of the regulation of his mood by means of reading and pursuing his studies. In addition, Li Guang wrote books when studying the classics, finishing the *Detailed Interpretations on Reading The Book of Changes* (《讀易詳說》) in ten volumes, which has been passed down to later generations.

In his later years, Li Guang’s poems were no longer on the shame of the Jingkang Incident, the Huaixi Victory (淮西大捷), the battle of Xuancheng, and other important national events. Instead, he turned his attention to daily life that looked trivial but actually contained aesthetic value and transformed the life of relegation into poetry, turning insignificant trivialities into endless philosophic tastes. In his poems composed then we can find not only a myriad of beautiful scenery and ancient books and records of sages, but, to Li Guang, also drinking and chess playing as in “I drink to my heart’s content to be intoxicated like Tao Yuanming (陶淵明) and indulge myself in playing chess regardless of win or loss like Xie An (謝安)” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16424); feasting and chatting freely as in “inviting men of letters to drink together, where all the people around write and chant poems like dancing dust of jade” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16384); sitting at leisure to compose poems as in “hanging around leisurely in a friend’s thatched cottage, where we recite poetry and play music at the rhythm of drums to cultivate our natural disposition and intelligence” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16462), all these scenarios represent a leisurely life with concealed poetry and philosophy that can nourish the

soul, dispel depression and injustice, and transcend from the pain caused by relegation, so as to adapt to nature and be resigned to the situation.

In fact, although Li Guang's poems after his relegation revealed more of a poor but happily comfortable life, his bold and vigorous character did not disappear. One of the editors of *The Complete Library of Four Treasures of Knowledge* (《四庫全書》) once remarked on Li Guang, "when the country was in danger, his loyalty and indignation were aroused... when he was old and thrown into the wildness, his integrity was so awe-inspiring that nobody dared to doubt it". (YONG Rong, et 1997: 2095) Indicating that Li Guang never changed his open, upright, and resolute thoughts and feelings before and after his relegation. Lu You recorded in his *Notes Made in Laoxue Cottage* (《老學庵筆記》) the friendship between his late father Lu Zai (陸宰) and Li Guang, in which Li Guang's remarks predicting his fate of relegation to Lu Zai can also show his open-minded and heroic heart: "I have been exiled afar. Qin Hui dislikes Zhao Yuanzhen and me in particular. Since Zhao has been banished to the mountain, how can I be spared? I heard that when Zhao Ding (趙鼎) was relegated, he cried and bid farewell to his children when receiving the order. I am not like him. I will simply put on my black shoes and cloth socks. It's time to go." (LU YOU 1979: 35)

Li Guang crossed the sea on his way to Qiongzhou, and he wrote *Three Poems on Crossing the Sea* (《渡海三首》), which contained his awe-inspiring and fearless pride. "Take a tail wind to travel a thousand miles over the Qiongzhou Mountain" means to the vast span of the terrifying waves as a level road that can be crossed easily with a fair tailwind. "Ask not the heaven where I come from; how can it be in vain even if I have to cross the sea in the south" is filled with the big-heartedness to be able to adapt himself to different circumstances and resigned to the situation created by destiny. "The tide returns to sing the sailing song, and the sails go like shuttles in the misty distance" outlines the magnificent atmosphere of the ocean in his flourishing writing brush. "I may not be strong in my heart, but I will come to see the waves stirred by whales in the ocean" (FU XUANCONG, et 1995: 16453) implies that he may not be heroic enough, so he needs the help of the whale waves in the ocean. His high fighting spirit is obviously beyond words. After settling down in Hainan, Li Guang was not afraid of the harsh environment here. Instead, obstinately, he told his relatives and friends in the north not to "bother too frequently to ask about me, because I'm determined to live and die by the sea of Hainan." (FU XUANCONG, et 1995: 16437) In the twenty-fifth year of Shaoxing, Li Guang was permitted to relocate to Chenzhou (郴州). At this time, he was over 80 years old, but his pride stayed unabated. In Chenzhou, he wrote an explanation for his self-portrait, "I spare no effort to hate ills and evils in my life and keep attaching crafty sycophants beyond my power even if I have to live in seclusion" to point out his upright and outspoken character in hating injustice like poison and his loyal actions of accusing evil and impeaching treacherous court officials no matter whether it would bring him disaster or blessing. He also claimed to be "living in the southern wilderness for 20 years with no vulgarity" (FU XUANCONG, et 1995: 16464), meaning that even if he was drifting in the Ridges and seas, he would not be stained by wind or frost, let alone become tacky, or defiled by vulgarity. Therefore, it can be said that the heroic and vigorous nature lies in Li Guang's disposition, which is reflected in his courage and resolute faith in victory before his relegation and his open and clear mind that never succumbed to suffering after his relegation. Chen Zhensun (陳振孫) commented on Li Guang's "superior integrity in his later years" (CHEN Zhensun 1987: 21) is a fair argument indeed.

3 “Learning for Oneself”: the Theoretical and Literary Mechanism of the Change of Poetic Styles

The key to Li Guang’s natural grit to transcend the hardships of life and maintain his unrestrained character lies in the merits of desireless honesty in his academic thoughts. To Hu Quan(胡銓), who was also relegated to Hainan, Li Guang advised him to “wish to take advantage of this leisure time to do my best to learn for myself and take it as my destiny endures with equanimity any hardships that befall us”(ZENG Zaozhuang 2006: 207) expressing his attitude to cultivate “learning for oneself” in case of trouble and difficulty. Confucius once said, “Scholars have been learning for themselves since time immemorial.” Cheng Yi(程頤) interpreted this argument as “ancient scholars learned for themselves, so they succeeded.”(CHENG Yi 2000: 382) His disciple Zhou Xingji’s(周行己) explanation made “learning for oneself” more clear, “I learn to have more filial piety and fraternal duty, and I learn to have more loyalty and trustworthiness. I learn to put knowledge into my soul to cultivate my own morality and enhance my knowledge.”(ZHOU Xingji 1986) In short, learning for the purpose of caring about the value of my own life, dispelling my sentimental fatigue, cultivating my internal virtues, and seeking my heart world and tranquility instead of laying emphasis on my personal honor or disgrace in the midst of hardships; thus, slander and hardship on the journey of my life will stay away. “Learning to improve my internal virtues and cultivate my morality” can also be governed by the Dao of “Inner Sage”(内圣), i.e., to pay attention to one’s own moral uplift without thought of others and intensify cultivation of my mind and nature become a sage, which is the “essence of ‘learning for oneself’”(SHEN Songqin 2005: 514).

“Learning for oneself” was clearly explained by Confucian scholars of the Northern Song Dynasty, but it was not truly practiced until Li Guang and other patriotic scholars relocated to the south and left the political arena. The scholars worshiping Cheng Yi studied the classics on the bank of the Luoshui River(洛水), while Nandu exiled ministers tried to improve their morality and self-cultivation in deserted mountains. In difficulty and poverty, they had no access to the “Practice of the Kingly Way”(外王), so their comprehension of the “ ‘Inner Sages’ talent and morality” was more profound. In the chapter of *Difficulty Diagram of The book of Changes* (《易經·困卦》), there is a rhetorical question, “Isn’t he a real gentleman who keeps his loftiness even in difficulty?”. Li Guang further explained it in his *Detailed Interpretations for Reading the Book of Changes*: “Loftiness is opposite to difficulty or poverty in this sense. A gentleman does not regard poverty as lowly or humble because he does not play dirty, so he remains sublime even in poverty ... becomes sublime in difficulty, and remains aspired without becoming degenerating because of difficulty and poverty.”(LI Guang 1986) He believed that being poor and humble is not the fault of a gentleman, so a gentleman’s way is clarified even though he is in difficulty. A gentleman will not be discouraged by poverty. Then, how can people “remain lofty in difficulty”? Li Guang also clarified it at the practical level in the process of interpreting *The Book of Changes*.

On the one hand, Li Guang took a Confucian attitude of being happy, like Confucius and his students. In his later years, Li Guang’s mind “is not disturbed by poverty or wealth, weal or woe.” He stuck to the pure inner domain of his heart and had nothing to do with wealth, position, or where he was. “I will never change my happy mind even when I live in an impoverished alley.” He was contented with poverty and interested only in spiritual things, and no matter when and where, he would maintain a calm state of mind, which was “the Dao

of sages to deal with difficulties” (LI Guang 1986). This is the reason why Li Guang’s poems in his later years can contain his easy nonchalance to fame and wealth in a time of dramatic changes and ups and downs of life and destiny.

On the other hand, daily diet and feasting can divert people’s attention away from misfortune. As Li Guang remarked, “With the virtue of being firm, even in the midst of danger and difficulty, one can keep upright, stay firm and remain sublime in his heart... Loftiness can consolidate oneself with virtues and generate happiness from daily diet and feasting.” (LI Guang 1986) That is, when there is nothing you can do about something, then you retreat and find pleasure from eating and feasting, enjoy yourself in a leisurely life, and still stick to morality. Li Guang also expressed a similar view in a letter to Hu Quan: “With such trials and tribulations in life, this is the moment to test one’s character and morality. I entertain myself with feasts when I stay home, I read books to gain wisdom when I am restless, and I meditate to consolidate my loyalty when I am still. I compose a poem and play a song, which is sagacious ancients’ way to get out of difficulty.” (ZENG Zaozhuang 2006: 208) So, during the period of his relegation, Li Guang could find some philosophic interest in daily life and transfer his depression and sadness to all things on earth.

Under the influence of “learning for oneself,” Li Guang probed through external falsehood and revealed a detached mentality in his poems. For instance, he said, “on the road of people’s life, one travels like a courier from one postal stop to the next.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16377) He realized that life is fleeting in the vast universe, and heaven and earth are nothing but taverns. “Don’t things of tangible existence lodge in them?” This is more incisive. All things with shapes are passengers between the sky and the earth. Then, “My life is really transient, so why sigh again and again about living and leaving?”. My life is short, and I am merely a lodger on the earth, so what is there to sigh about? “Everywhere I go, I find it a place where I can practice my virtue pursuit and enhancement, so I adapt myself and resign to all situations that fit my mind.” Wherever you are, you find the place for enlightenment and cultivation of your mind. Therefore, Li Guang managed to “go afar and mix with fishermen and wood choppers, and stand aloof like a hermit from worldly affairs.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16383) Never mind the cunning, deceitful and crafty world, stay away from the mundane, and have fun with birds, herons, fishermen and woodcutters. After seeing through the vain and the flashy and understanding the true meaning of life, in his mind, Li Guang saw no difference in where he was, in court or with the commonality. He could help the country and do good to society when in court, and being with the commonality could not hinder him from improving his virtue and self-cultivation. On the contrary, in terms of objective reality, when he was in the political vortex, troubled by the insincere demeanors of officials and the severe partisan conflicts, Li Guang could neither build a peaceful spiritual world nor could he calmly comprehend the knowledge of the sages. Once he was driven to the peak of the mountains and to the end of the waters, in the dynamic development process of confronting difficulties, dissolving suffering, and transcending distress, Li Guang constantly pondered over the nature of the world, and finally deepened his own cognition. That’s why Li Guang composed such as poem as “Not until I go through a lot of trouble and arrive at villages in Hainan will the I realize wisely the blessing in misfortune” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16396). He took his relegation as a blessing because he came to realize that “the repeated sufferings in the ten years” was exactly because “the Creator knew I was stubborn and it would be difficult to enlighten me, so that was the reason for my sufferings.” (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16397)

However, Li Guang's comprehension of "learning for oneself" does not mean that he was separated from the real world and became "an outsider." In fact, Li Guang never forgot the sufferings of his family country, the world and the people's hardships. He always shouldered the due responsibilities of a traditional intellectual. Even in the wilderness, he still experienced and observed with compassion the hardships of the people and criticized the tyranny and the severe punishment. Seeing "the illegal and immoral taxations and government corvées in the four prefectures of Hainan," where corrupt officials were plundering the property of the people at will, which caused robbers and thieves to rise in swarms, Li Guang was so indignant that he wrote *Offshore Ballads* (《海外謠》) to accuse the exorbitant taxes and miscellaneous duties that made the people of Hainan "nowhere to complain, so they rebelled to become robbers like flames." The officials who forced the people to rebel would lead their troops to suppress the rebellion: "The killing makes them happy, and the corrupt officials flatter themselves proudly as virtuous. From now on, they have no scruples, and when will the expropriation stop?" (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16391-16392). The voice was like metal and stone, full of hardness and strength and indignation, showing his righteousness in pleading in the name of the people. Another of his poems also depicts vividly that the people's residences were destroyed by the rain and they became homeless, but they had to provide rations for military use in such a tragic situation where they themselves were hungry and cold: "With the raging gales and waves, how can the people live peacefully? When it is impossible to expect a full meal, they have to provide military rations." (FU Xuancong, et 1995: 16387)

The analysis of the theoretical mechanism of "learning for oneself" indicates that the "'Inner Sages' talent and morality" and the "Practice of the Kingly Way" are "interconnected mutual to each other's exterior and interior" (SHEN Songqin 2005: 514), the two sides of one body. Li Guang and other Nandu people adhered to lofty ideals and the Confucian morality and ideals of life, upheld gentlemanly righteousness, saw their inner hearts and cultivated their minds in order to await the time of fair government and promising future for the people so that they could walk out of the mountains and forests, return to the court, board in horse-drawn vehicles and take the bridle to straighten up the universe and have a bright future. As Cheng Yi commented, a gentleman "will cherish his virtues and wait patiently for opportunities with his morals in mind", which is the way of "stay peaceful as a standby" (CHENG Yi 1989: 23). Li Guang and others cherished their morality and self-cultivation standards, which meant the opportunity to practice "the kingly way". The so-called "clear conscience for a smooth life, and the inner sage leading to the outer king" (Aisin Gioro-Hongli, *In Response to Cheng Yi's Notes to The Book of Changes*). The "'Inner Sages' talent and morality" serve as a premise for the "Practice of the Kingly Way." Only by tempering the conscience and integrity can one make outstanding achievements when he rises in status one day. The "Practice of the Kingly Way" is the mission of the "'Inner Sages' talent and morality." Only with the pioneering and enterprising ambition to attain the ideal of Yao and Shun's ideal for the emperor will the perseverant adherence of the scholars and officials in poverty and difficulty have practical significance.

4 Conclusion

In short, Li Guang's poems are loud, grand, magnificent, impassioned, and of extremely nationalistic integrity. In his later years, due to his opposition to humiliating peace-seeking, his poetry became indifferent and

detached, but his heroic spirit remained undiminished. Still deeply concerned over state affairs and people's livelihood, his resolutely loyal soul remained unchanged till his death. He was worthy of the title of "Famous Official of the Southern Song Dynasty." Li Guang's poetic style before and after his relegation actually serves as a strong representation of the torrent of the times at the turn of the two Song Dynasties. After the Jingkang Incident, the poems of Li Gang, Chen Yuyi(陳與義), Zhang Yuangan(張元幹) and others were equally grand and vigorous. After the Shaoxing Peace Conference, Li Mixun(李彌遜), Hu Quan, Zhang Jiucheng(張九成) and others' poems were also detached and relaxed. However, Li Guang is chosen as a typical example on the following grounds: First, Li Guang held a high position in the Year of Jianyan, and the level of persecution he suffered after the peace conference was unmatched by that of no one except Zhao Ding. It is unarguable to claim that he was deeply immersed in the sudden and perplexing changes in politics in the early Southern Song Dynasty. In contrast, Li Gang and Chen Yuyi died with their will unaccomplished before the peace talk; Hu Quan was not well-known and had few works during the Jianyan period; Liu Zihui(劉子翬) kept himself at arm's length with the court; Zhang Yuangan was only a subordinate to Li Guang; Li Mixun merely stayed at home idle after the peace agreement; while Zhao Ding's poems are full of sadness, which is a special case. Second, Li Guang concentrated on government affairs before his relegation, although he studied under Liu Anshi, he was not known as a Neo-Confucianist, unlike Zhang Jiucheng, Zeng Ji(曾幾), Hu Yin(胡寅), etc. Who had been scholars with "accomplished temperament and cultivation" (WANG Jiansheng 2011: 112). However, after his relegation, Li Guang was able to keep his desireless honesty in his academic thoughts, which helps us to peel off the coat of Neo-Confucianism and realize the universality of "learning for oneself" in the Nandu period. As a result, from the change in Li Guang's poetic style, we can see more clearly the social trends and literary preferences since Nandu.

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