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EREMITISM, SAGEHOOD, AND PUBLIC SERVICE: THE *ZHOUYI KOUYI* OF HU YUAN

HON TZE-KI

Contents

Introduction*

In studies of the Northern Song (960–1127), Hu Yuan 胡瑗 (993–1059) is often presented as a transitional figure. Known as a "master of the early Northern Song," he is considered to be a forerunner of the Cheng–Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism. Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–1755), for instance, prefaced the chapter on Hu Yuan in the *Song Yuan xue'an* 宋元學案 (Intellectual Biographies of the Song and Yuan Periods) by stressing that the thriving of Song Neo-Confucian learning began with Hu Yuan and his contemporary, Sun Fu 孫復 (992–1057). To support his view, Quan reminded his readers that Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) – the co-founder of the Cheng–Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism – had studied with Hu Yuan at the Imperial Academy in Kaifeng (*taixue* 太學).[1] Likewise, in discussing Hu Yuan's contribution to the study of the *Yijing* (Book of Changes), the eighteenth-century compilers of the *Siku quanshu* (The Complete Works of the Emperor's Four Treasuries) emphasized the link between Hu Yuan and Cheng Yi. Citing multiple sources illustrating Cheng's debt to Hu in interpreting the *Yijing*, the compilers argued that, contrary to the conventional understanding, Cheng was more a student of Hu than of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤

* I thank Edward Shaughnessy and Stanley Murashige for their comments on the earlier drafts of this article.

1 *Song Yuan xue'an* (Taibei: Zhonghua shuju, *Sibu beiyao* ed.), 1:1a.

(1017–1073).[2] Contemporary historians like Hou Wailu 候外盧 and Qian Mu 錢穆 continue this trend by stressing Hu's role in shaping the early development of Neo-Confucianism.[3]

Hu's importance to the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism notwithstanding, we will get a different picture of him if we locate him in his own times. Born at the end of emperor Taizong's 太宗 reign (976–997) when the Song dynasty had just solidified its control over its territory, Hu belonged to the first generation of the Song scholar-literati[4] with an acute sense of living in a new era. Part of the collective consciousness of this generation of the Song scholar-literati was their drive to distinguish themselves from their predecessors in the Five Dynasties (906–960) – a period of political disunity, militarism, and rapid change of government. Spending much of his mature life under emperors Zhenzong 眞宗 (r. 997–1022) and Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1023–1063), Hu witnessed the establishment of the civil governance, characterized by large numbers of scholar-literati being admitted into the Song bureaucracy by passing the civil service examinations.[5] For Hu and his contemporaries, the pressing issue was to articulate the mission of these new civil bureaucrats, who believed that they "ruled the world with the emperor."[6]

In this article, I examine Hu's writings in the context of the first hundred years of the Northern Song. The goal of this study is twofold. First, in locating

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2 *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1933), p. 12.

3 Hou Wailu *et al.*, *Song Ming lixue shi* 宋明理學史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), pp. 31-45; Qian Mu, *Song Ming lixue gaishu* 宋明理學概述, in: *Qian binsi xiansheng quanji* 錢賓四先生全集, vol. 9 (Taibei: Lianjing chubanshe, 1998), pp. 1-30.

4 In this article, I use two terms to identify two types of *shi* 士 (men of letters) in the early Northern Song. I use the term "scholar-literati" to refer to those men of letters who were yet to pass the civil service examinations, but took advantage of their educational background to cultivate a social network with the officials. I use the term "scholar-officials" to refer to those men of letters who joined the bureaucracy after successfully passing the civil service examinations. The distinction of these two types of men of letters is important, as it shows the variety of roles assumed by men of letters and the intricate relationship among different groups of them.

5 Much research has been done on how the civil service examinations helped to change the bureaucracy and the social structure of the early Northern Song. See, for instance, John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China: A Social History of Examination*, new ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 47-65; Thomas H.C. Lee, *Government Education and Examinations in Sung China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1985), pp. 201-230.

6 Zhang Qifan 張其凡 argues that beginning with Renzong's reign, the political structure of the Northern Song had been changed such that the scholar-officials felt like "they ruled the world with the emperor" (*huangdi yu shidaifu gong zhi tianxia* 皇帝與士大夫共治天下). According to Zhang, there was a delicate balance of power in the political structure between the emperor, the ministers, and the censors. See Zhang, *Songchu zhengzhi tanyan* 宋初政治探研 (Guangzhou: Jinian daxue chubanshe, 1995), pp. 62-68. For a study of the change in the identity of the early Northern Song scholar-literati, see Peter K. Bol, *"This Culture of Ours": Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 148-175.

Hu in his own times, I want to demonstrate how he responded to issues of his days as a creative thinker. In conventional historical accounts, much has been said about him as a man of action – a reformer of the Song school system, an inspiring teacher, and an expert of court musical instruments.[7] Yet, little attention has been paid to him being a man of thought, who offered critical opinions on current affairs and insightful suggestions on governing. Based on a close reading of Hu's writings, this study aims to show how he was actively involved in the political and philosophical debates of his times. Second, with this study of Hu, I wish to call attention to the vitality and dynamism of early Northern Song thought. Perhaps, as a result of our preoccupation with Neo-Confucianism and the broad social-economic change during the "Tang–Song transition," we often overlook the first hundred years of the Northern Song. We seem to forget that drastic social and intellectual changes took place in tenth-century China, when the militarism of the Five Dynasties was gradually replaced by the civil governance of the early Northern Song.[8] This study will demonstrate the importance of examining this major transformation in medieval China.

In this study, I focus on Hu Yuan's commentary on the *Yijing*, the *Zhouyi kouyi* 周易口義 (The Orally Transmitted Meanings of *Change of the Zhou* [Dynasty]). The longest writing by Hu that has survived,[9] the *Zhouyi kouyi* is an im-

[7] See Tuo Tuo 脫脫 (ed.), *Songshi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 432:12837-12838; Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 epitaph commemorating Hu Yuan, in: *Ouyang wenzhonggong ji* 歐陽文忠公集 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1930), 25:98-99; R.C. Pian, "Hu Yüan," in: *Sung Biographies*, edited by Herbert Franke (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1976), pp. 444-445; Zhong Huimin 鍾惠民, "Songru Hu Yuan de xueshu ji qi yingxiang" 宋儒胡瑗的學術及其影響 (M.A. thesis, Taibei Zhongguo wenhua xueyuan, 1974), pp. 20-30; Ge Rongjin 葛榮晉, "Hu Yuan jiqi anding xuepai de mingti dayong zhi xue" 胡瑗及其安定學派的明體達用之學, in: *Zhongguo zhexue* 中國哲學 16 (1993), pp. 54-79; Wm. Theodore de Bary, *East Asian Civilizations: A Dialogue in Five Stages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 47-48. To the best of my knowledge, the only book that treats Hu Yuan seriously as a thinker is Lin Yisheng's 林益勝 study, *Hu Yuan de yili yixue* 胡瑗的義理易學 (Taibei: Commercial Press, 1974). Lin argues that Hu Yuan was the reviver of the *Ten Wings* school of the *Yijing* tradition in the Northern Song.

[8] For a discussion of the social and intellectual changes in the early Northern Song, see Tze-ki Hon, "Military Governance versus Civil Governance: A Comparison of the *Old History* and the *New History* of the Five Dynasties," in: *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Confucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics*, ed. by Kai-Wing Chow, On-cho Ng, and John B. Henderson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 85-106.

[9] Besides the *Zhouyi kouyi*, there are three extant pieces of Hu Yuan's writings. First is Hu's commentary (in bits and pieces) on the *Analects* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* collected in: *Song Yuan xue'an*, 1:2b-3b. Second is a treatise on court musical instruments that Hu co-edited with Ruan Yi 阮逸, entitled *Huangyou xinyue tuji* 皇祐新樂圖記 (Notes with Diagrams on the New Music of the Huang You Period [of Emperor Renzong]). The treatise is now available in: *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 影印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taiwan: Commercial Press, 1983) 54:451-483. Third is his commentary on the *Great Plan* chapter of the Book of Documents, *Hongfan kouyi* 洪範口義, also available in the above-mentioned Taiwan reprint of the *Siku quanshu*, 211:1-22. For a brief study of Hu's commentary on the *Great Plan*, see Michael Nylan, *The Shifting Center: The Original "Great Plan" and Later Readings*. Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XXIV (Sankt Augustin – Nettetal: Steyler, 1992), pp. 63-97. In her bibliography (p. 182), Nylan mistook the *Hongfan kouyi* for *Hongfan kaoyi* 洪範考異.

portant venue for understanding him as a thinker who seriously contemplated the roots of a perfect society. A complete commentary on the *Yijing* (including the sixty-four hexagrams, the line statements, and the *Ten Wings*), the *Zhouyi kouyi* shows the sophistication of Hu as a classical scholar who made the ancient classic speak to his tenth-century readers. In reading Hu's commentary, I follow what Kidder Smith calls "a study of the [*Yijing*] in history." In Smith's words, a historical reading of an *Yijing* commentary "seek[s] to show how a classic was appropriated by later thinkers, [and] how a single text could be taken to mean many different things ... ."[10] This method of reading an *Yijing* commentary as a historical text is particularly relevant to Hu Yuan. As will be demonstrated in the following, Hu was determined to challenge the Tang interpretation of the *Yijing* – the *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義 (The True Meanings of *Change of the Zhou* [Dynasty]) of Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) – by offering a new reading of the classic. As part of his attempt to overcome the legacy of the Five Dynasties, Hu saw the *Zhouyi zhengyi* as the textual legitimization of what he considered to be erroneous practices in that chaotic period. By refuting the *Zhouyi zhengyi*, he expressed the desire of the first generation of the Northern Song scholar-literati to part ways with the past.

A Biography of Hu Yuan

Hu Yuan was born into a poor scholar family in Taizhou 泰州 (in present-day Jiangsu) in 993. Both Hu's grandfather and father managed to secure only low-level administrative posts at local prefectures. As a child, Hu was known as a prodigy. He was proficient in writing by the age of seven and mastered the Five Classics by the age of thirteen.[11] Despite his talents, however, he failed to pass the civil service examinations – a stigma that he had to carry throughout his life.[12]

Following a popular practice of the time, upon reaching adulthood, Hu left his family for Mount Tai (present-day Shandong) for further learning. For ten years, he hid on the mountain like a recluse and studied the Confucian classics with his two friends Sun Fu 孫复 and Shi Jie 石介(1005–1045). During these ten years, usually regarded as the pivotal period of Hu's life, he developed his own understanding of the Confucian classics. According to one account, Hu was so absorbed in his study that he even threw all of his family letters into a stream after spotting the words "peaceful and contented" (*ping'an* 平安) on them.[13]

Hu worked for a while as a private teacher in the Zhejiang area before being invited in 1035 by Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052) to teach in the Suzhou Pre-

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[10] Kidder Smith, *et al.*, *Sung Dynasty Uses of the* I Ching (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. VII. For another discussion of the historical reading of an *Yijing* commentary, see Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the* I Ching *as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 5-9.

[11] *Song Yuan xue'an*, 1:1a; Zhong Huimin, *Songru Hu Yuan*, pp. 20-21.

[12] *Sung Biographies*, p. 444.

[13] *Song Yuan xue'an*, 1:1b; Zhong Huimin, *Songru Hu Yuan*, pp. 21-22.

fectural School. It was in Suzhou that he first earned fame as a strict teacher who enforced the school rules and demanded total dedication to learning from his students.[14] In 1042, he was invited to teach in the Huzhou Prefectural School (near Suzhou). In Huzhou, he initiated his famous method of dividing students into the "chamber of classical studies" (*jingyi zhai* 經義齋) and the "chamber of administrative skills" (*zhishi zhai* 治事齋).[15] In the former, students were required to develop their own views on the Confucian classics; in the latter, students were given special training in practical skills like public policy, national defense, and irrigation. Hu's method of teaching was so successful that it was adopted by the newly established Imperial Academy at Kaifeng in 1044.[16]

Though his teaching method was adopted by the Imperial Academy, for eight years Hu did not have a chance to attend to its implementation. Between 1044 and 1052, Hu was commissioned by the government to revise the musical system for the court.[17] He helped to prescribe a set of measurements for casting bronze bells, although many of which were later proven to be ineffective.[18] It was in 1052 that Hu was offered a professorship in the prestigious Imperial Academy, reaching the apex of his career as a teacher. But being a former failed candidate of the civil service examinations, Hu's early days at the Imperial Academy were by no means easy. He was constantly challenged and, in many instances, despised. It was not until he had delivered a series of brilliant lectures on the *Yijing* that he gained respect as a well-learned scholar.[19] Our received text of the *Zhouyi kouyi* may be notes from these lectures compiled by Hu's student, Ni Tianyin 倪天隱.[20] From then on, students from all corners of the country competed to enroll in the Imperial Academy to study under Hu. At one point, the student population grew so rapidly that the Imperial Academy had to enlarge its size by acquiring a nearby military base. Because of his popularity as a teacher, Hu was remembered by his contemporaries as the central figure responsible for giving fame to the Imperial Academy.[21]

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[14] *Songshi*, 432:12835; *Song Yuan xue'an*, 1:1b; Zhong Huimin, *Songru Hu Yuan*, p. 22.

[15] *Song Yuan xue'an*, 1:1b; Zhong Huimin, *Songru Hu Yuan*, p. 22.

[16] *Songshi*, 12835; Chen Bangzhan 陳邦瞻 (ed.), *Songshi jishi benmo* 宋史紀事本末 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), p. 370; *Song Yuan xue'an*, 1:2; Zhong Huimin, *Songru Hu Yuan*, pp. 22-24.

[17] Li Tao 李燾 (ed.), *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑒長編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979) 173:4175, 175:4243; *Songshi*, p. 12837; *Songshi jishi benmo*, p. 212; *Song Yuan xue'an*, 1:1b; *Sung Biographies*, p. 444.

[18] *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 192:4635; *Songshi*, p. 13434; *Songshi jishi benmo*, p. 213.

[19] *Song Yuan xue'an*, 1:3b; Zhong Huimin, *Songru Hu Yuan*, p. 24.

[20] *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, 1:12; Zhong Huimin, *Songru Hu Yuan*, pp. 24-26.

[21] *Songshi*, 432:128 37; Zhong Huimin, *Songru Hu Yuan*, p. 25.

A Critique of Kong Yingda

In the "Preface" ("Fati" 發題) to his *Zhouyi kouyi*, Hu Yuan devoted considerable length to discussing the meaning of the word *yi* 易 of the *Yijing*. Being a classic with multiple layers including pictorial images, hexagram statements, line statements, and ten pieces of commentary (known as the *Ten Wings*) attributed to Confucius, the true nature of the *Yijing* had long been a subject of dispute among classical scholars before the tenth century.[22] By defining the meaning of *yi* of the *Yijing*, Hu attempted to put an end to the controversy:

> The *Yijing* is the great law that Fu Xi, King Wen, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius bestowed to the ten thousand generations. It is the book about the changes of *sancai* [i.e., heaven, earth, and man] ... The Way of Changes is the principle of heaven and man. Speaking of changes in terms of the Way of Heaven, they are the completion of the ten thousand things due to the changes of the *yin* force and the *yang* force; they are the succession of the four seasons due to the changes of the hot weather and the cold weather; they are the appearance of day and night due to the changes in the position of the sun and the moon. Speaking of changes in terms of the Way of Man, they are the fortunes and misfortunes due to changes in gains and losses [in one's activity]; they are the comforts and discomforts due to the changes in man's sincerity; they are the orders and disorders due to the changes [in the relative power] of superior men and inferior men [in the government].[23]

Seemingly straightforward, Hu's interpretation of *yi* was in sharp contrast to Kong Yingda's. One may even say that Hu's interpretation of *yi* was intended to be a critique of Kong's.

For Kong Yingda, the word *yi* had three meanings. In an essay accompanying the *Zhouyi zhengyi*, he pronounced that the word *yi* meant change, constancy and ease, all at once. By giving these three meanings to the word *yi*, Kong argued that there are three equally important components in the *Yijing*, (1) its description of the natural world and the human world as contingent and ever-changing, (2) its emphasis on the existence of a regularity or a pattern for all changes, and (3) its depiction of the spontaneity and effortlessness with which all changes take place in the universe.[24] According to Kong, each of these three aspects of the *Yijing* points in its own way to the ineffable natural system (or *wu* 無) that gives rise to all beings. For instance, *yi* as constancy denotes the fact that the phenomenal world (*you* 有) in which human beings live is part of the grand natural system. Regardless of how autonomous the phenomenal world appears to be, it is governed by the ineffable natural system. In the same vein, *yi* as ease refers to the simplicity and effortlessness of the natural system in regulating all activities in the

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[22] Zhu Bokun 朱伯崑, *Yixue zhexue shi* 易學哲學史, vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1986); Kidder Smith, *Sung Dynasty Uses of the* I Ching, pp. 5-25.

[23] *Zhouyi kouyi*, *Siku quanshu zhenben* ed. (Taibei: Commercial Press), Preface: 1a-2b. In the *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu*, the *Zhouyi kouyi* appears in 8:169-564.

[24] See Kong's essay, "Yi zhi san ming" 易之三名 (The Three Names of *Yi*), in: *Zhouyi zhengyi*, *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu*, 7:303-304.

universe without overtly intervening in them. As for *yi* as contingency, it describes the fear and anxiety that human beings have to endure when they fail to see their role in the natural system.[25] With these three meanings of *yi*, Kong called on his readers to read the *Yijing* as "a pointer" – directing their attention from mundane human affairs to the grand natural system.[26]

In contrast to Kong's interpretation, Hu Yuan insisted that *yi* meant changes alone. His denial of the meanings "constant" and "easy" for *yi* was more than a disagreement on the meaning of the word. It was, in effect, a rejection of Kong's reading of the *Yijing* as a pointer to the grand natural system. By restricting *yi* to mean changes alone, Hu affirmed the status of the *Yijing* as a book on phenomenal transformations in general and human affairs in particular. The significance of Hu's position regarding the meaning of *yi* lies not so much in its novelty, but in the way it undermines Kong's attempt to privilege the grand natural system (*wu*) over phenomenal affairs (*you*). By arguing that *yi* means changes alone, Hu not only treats phenomenal affairs as ontologically real, but also puts them on the same footing with the grand natural system as two indispensable parts of the universe. Underlying this viewpoint is a different cosmological outlook: the universe is an organic totality in which everything (visible or invisible, part and whole) intermixes and interchanges.[27]

This cosmological outlook is elaborated at considerable length in Hu's commentary on the *Xici* 繫辭 (Attached Verbalizations).[28] For example, in commenting on the statement "Therefore the eight trigrams succeed one another by turns, as the firm and the yielding displace each other,"[29] he states,

> Heaven originally lies above, and earth originally lies below. When the vital spirit from heaven descends and the vital spirit from earth ascends, the *yang* cosmic force will change into the *yin* cosmic force as soon as it is in full force, and the *yin* cosmic force will change into the *yang* cosmic force as soon as it is in full force. [In this manner,] when the *yang* cosmic force is firm, the *yin* cosmic force will be soft; when the *yin* cosmic force is reduced, the *yang* cosmic force will return with

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25 "Yi zhi san ming," in: *Zhouyi zhengyi*, p. 304.

26 "Yi zhi san ming," in: *Zhouyi zhengyi*, p. 304. For a study of the philosophical meaning of "the pointer," see Rudolf G. Wagner, "Wang Bi: 'The Structure of the Laozi's Pointers' (*Laozi weizhi lilüe*) – A Philological Study and Translation – ," in: *T'oung Pao* 72 (1986), pp. 92-129.

27 Tsuchida Kenjiro 土田健次郎 makes a similar argument in comparing Hu Yuan with Kong Yingda. See his "Isen ekiden no shisō" 伊川易傳の思想, in: *Sōdai no shakai to bunka* 宋代の社會と文化, ed. by *Sōdai shi kenkyūkai* 宋代史研究會 (Tokyo: Kuko shoin, 1983), pp. 237-251.

28 As one of the *Ten Wings*, many parts of the *Xici* discuss cosmology. It is by no means accidental that Hu Yuan chose to expound his cosmological view by commenting on the *Xici*. For a study of the *Xici*, see Willard J. Peterson, "Making Connections: 'Commentary on the Attached Verbalization' of the *Book of Change*," in: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42.1 (June 1982), pp. 67-116.

29 Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 283. Unless stated otherwise, I use Wilhelm's translation when quoting the *Yijing* text.

> strength. The firm and the soft cut and rub each other. They cause changes to each other. Thus, the principle [for the generation] of the myriad things comes into being.[30]

In this commentary, Hu attempts to give an explanation of the creation of the universe. He believes that the universe is created by two cosmic forces, the *yin* and the *yang*, in constant interaction. By constantly transforming into each other, the two cosmic forces give dynamism to the universe and generate the myriad things. Certainly, Hu's cosmogony does not account for how the *yin* and the *yang* cosmic forces come into being. Nor does he explain how the two forces come to intermix and interchange with each other. But even with these crucial questions remaining unsettled, he still makes his point clear that this universe is created by itself and that it perpetuates itself through the incessant interchange of the *yin* and the *yang* cosmic forces.[31] With this point established, he has taken his first step toward undermining Kong Yingda's argument that there is an ineffable grand natural system that "gives birth" (*sheng* 生) to all beings.

Based upon his cosmogony, Hu develops his dynamic view of the universe. One place for him to air his view is the oft-quoted *Xici* statement "generation and regeneration is called change."[32] Hu's comment on the statement runs as follows:

> "Generation and regeneration" means the *yin* cosmic force gives birth to the *yang* cosmic force, and the *yang* cosmic force gives birth to the *yin* cosmic force. The Way of heaven and earth as well as the virtue of a sage are called "the noble enterprise" when one speaks of them from the perspective of their significance in bringing prosperity and abundance [to this world]. They are also known as "the divine virtue" when one speaks of them from the perspective of their significance in renewing [the myriad things] on a daily basis. And the way of generating and completing [the myriad things in this world] takes the forms of transmutation and metamorphosis, life and death. What is alive will soon become dead; and what is dead will soon become alive. The "enterprise" and "virtue" of heaven and earth and the sage are to keep generating and regenerating the myriad things without an end.[33]

In this commentary, the description of the universe as a dynamic entity constantly generating and regenerating itself is expressed in full. Since the universe creates itself and perpetuates itself by the constant interchange of the *yin* and the *yang* cosmic forces, unceasing transformation becomes a characterizing feature of the universe. And since all transformations in this universe are nothing but the inter-

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30 *Zhouyi kouyi*, "*Xici* shang" (Part one of *Xici*), p. 6b.

31 Hu Yuan was part of the Chinese philosophical tradition of concentrating on the universe being an organic totality, rather than the origin of the universe. For further discussion on this characteristic of Chinese philosophy, see Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1989), pp. 9-25; Tu Wei-ming, "The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature," in: *id.*, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 35-50.

32 Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 299.

33 *Zhouyi kouyi*, "*Xici* shang," p. 41b.

change between the *yin* and the *yang* cosmic forces, life and death – the two most distinguishing stages of change in the phenomenal world – are not the beginning and cessation of life in the conventional understanding. Rather, they are different phases of the continuum of change espoused by the interaction of the two cosmic forces. In this regard, what is living becomes dead, and what is dead becomes living, depending on how the two cosmic forces interact at each point. When life and death are interchangeable, all other elements in this universe – be they natural or supernatural, visible or invisible, big or small, animate or inanimate – are interchangeable as well.

From this dynamic view of the universe, Hu Yuan launches his strongest attack on Kong Yingda's attempt to privilege the ineffable natural system (*wu*) over phenomenal affairs (*you*). In his commentary on the *Xici* statement, "Therefore: What is above form is called *Dao*; what is within form is called tool,"[34] he states:

> The Way of heaven begins in formlessness (*wuxing* 無形) and ends in form (*youxing* 有形). Form and formlessness are both creations of the Way (*Dao* 道). The Way is that which man models after; it is that by which [man] reaches heaven. Before the existence of heaven and earth, the Way disperses in the vital forces. After scattering in form, the Way hides within what is phenomenal. The Way is infinite and not confined to formed objects. When the Way is applied to the phenomenal world, it penetrates all things. When the Way is practiced in the human world, it gives rise to all kinds of changes. All these are the essence of the Way. Indeed, [the Way] begins in formlessness and ends in form.[35]

In this commentary, Hu makes "the Way" the supreme concept in describing the organic, ever-changing universe. In his mind, there is no category other than "the Way" that can accurately portray the dynamism and the self-generative nature of the universe. Even formlessness (*wu*) is only one aspect of "the Way." And by upholding "the Way" as the supreme category about the universe, Hu succeeds in eliminating the precedence of *wu* over *you* which is central to Kong Yingda's reading of the *Yijing*. For Kong, the distinction of form and formlessness is the key to understand the structure of the universe, and a crucial step in one's quest for transcending mundane daily life. For Hu, however, the distinction of form and formlessness is meaningless because both are different phases of "the Way." He argues that no matter whether one focuses on mundane daily life or the grand natural system, what one finds is still the same organic, ever-changing universe in action.

The *Yijing* as a Classic on Human Affairs

Based upon his understanding of the meaning of *yi*, Hu suggests that the *Yijing* should be read from a humanistic perspective. Without denying that there is a cosmological dimension in the *Yijing*, he argues that the classic is at its best when offering advice for perfecting human society and minimizing human misfortunes.

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[34] Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 323.

[35] *Zhouyi kouyi*, "*Xici* shang," p. 112a.

To underscore this humanistic dimension of the *Yijing*, he writes in the "Preface" to the *Zhouyi kouyi*:

> Hence, the changes in the natural realm are growth and completion, which are constant on their own. The changes in the human realm depend upon how those on the higher positions [in the government] make their judgements.
>
> Why must it be so [regarding the changes in the human realm]? [It is because,] if those with positions know that orders and disorders arise due to the changes [in the relative power] of superior men and inferior men, then they should always put superior men in government posts, and abandon the inferior men. [When this is done], what underneath heaven will always be in order, without disorder. [If those with positions] know that benefits and harms arise due to the changes of one's sincerity, then they should employ purely sincerity, and get rid of insincerity. [When this is done], what they do will always be beneficial, without any harm. [If those with positions] know that fortunes and misfortunes come as a result of the changes in one's gains or losses, then they should strive to gain in their activities, and avoid losses in their activities. [When this is done,] their activities will always be fortunate, without any misfortune. All these point to one thing: one must take great care in the changes in human affairs.[36]

This is an important passage for our understanding of Hu's position on the *Yijing*. In the passage, he first acknowledges that changes in both the natural realm and the human realm are discussed in the *Yijing*. Then, he immediately adds that from a humanistic point of view, the *Yijing* is most enlightening in its discussion of changes with respect to man. For him, changes in nature – no matter how spectacular and orderly they are – are beyond human control. They run their own course and man plays no part in them except to comply. Conversely, man's acts are always significant to the changes in the human realm. His acts have a direct impact on his fortunes, comforts, and governing. In the human world, man is always an agent of change and a determining factor in his future. For Hu, the *Yijing*'s discussion of changes in human affairs is an inexhaustible treasure for all reflective souls.[37]

A point of textual evidence for Hu's humanistic reading of the *Yijing* is that the classic ends with the hexagram *weiji* 未濟 (Incompletion, #64). At first glance, the hexagram *jiji* 既濟 (Completion, #63) appears to be the more logical ending of the classic. With its perfect alignment of the *yin* lines and *yang* lines

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[36] *Zhouyi kouyi*, "Fati" (Preface), pp. 2b-3a.

[37] Lin Yisheng calls Hu Yuan's humanistic reading of the *Yijing* "pure Confucian" (*chun ru* 純儒) (*Hu Yuan de yili yixue*, pp. 102-153). With all due respect for Lin's contribution in offering a thoughtful analysis of the *Zhouyi kouyi* based on the Confucian categories of self-cultivation, administering one's family, serving the people, and ordering the world, he appears to overlook the changing meaning of "Confucianism" and "Confucian scholars" over time. In many instances, what was considered as "pure Confucian" at one time was not be regarded as "pure" anymore at another time. For a discussion of the changes in the meaning of "Confucian scholars" from the seventh century to the twelfth century, see Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* pp. 32-76.

and its auspicious line statements,[38] the hexagram *jiji* offers an assurance that everything is fine after one has gone through all the challenges in life. True to its name – "Completion" – the hexagram would provide a closure to the reader's long journey of reading through the classic, and by extension, the long journey of life. Instead, the classic ends with the less desirable hexagram *weiji*. The hexagram is troubled by its line alignment – its *yin* lines and *yang* lines are apparently out of order, with a *yin* line in a *yang* position and *vice versa*. Also true to its name – "Incompletion" – the hexagram line statements are filled with warnings about imminent danger and suggestions for more work to be done.[39] Hence, the question for many *Yijing* commentators (including the masterly Wang Bi 王弼, 226–249) is why the classic appears to end without an ending.[40]

Attempting to offer an explanation to this peculiar ending of the *Yijing*, Hu writes in his commentary on *weiji*,

> On the issue of why the sixty-four hexagrams begin with *qian* and *kun* and end with *weiji*, *qian* and *kun* connote the sources of growth and completion. They must therefore be placed at the beginning. *Weiji* has to be placed at the end because it is the nature of ordinary people to lose their heads when things seem to be in order. They may be unable to worry about dangers in times of comfort, or unable to think about annihilation in times of safety. As a result, they invite trouble. Hence, by ending the text with *weiji*, the sagely writer [of the *Yijing*] is giving us a profound lesson.[41]

In explaining the significance of ending the *Yijing* with the hexagram *weiji*, Hu argues that complacency is the root of disaster.[42] For him, everything in the hu-

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[38] The *jiji* is the perfect hexagram in terms of the order of its six lines. Reading from the bottom to the top, each of the six lines is in perfect position: a *yang* line at the bottom, aggressively engaged in creating new opportunity; a *yin* line in the second (the minister) position, submissive but loyal to the *yang* line in the fifth (the king) position; a *yang* line in the third position, ready to break new grounds in the transition from the lower trigram to the upper trigram; a *yin* line in the fourth position, taking the time to recuperate after a period of assertion; a *yang* line in the fifth (the king) position, in total command of the entire hexagram, and a *yin* line in the sixth position, enjoying retirement upon reaching old age. In part reflecting the perfect order of the six lines, the line statements of the six lines are predominantly auspicious. They contain such encouraging statements as "Success in small matters. Perseverance furthers," "He gets his tail in the water. No blame," and "The Illustrious Ancestor disciplines the Devil's country. After three years he conquers it." See Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, pp. 244-248.

[39] A good example showing the inconclusiveness of the *weiji* is the line statement of its top (the sixth) line. The line statement runs as follows: "There is drinking of wine. In genuine confidence. No blame. But if one wets his head, he loses it, in truth." See Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 252.

[40] For a translation of Wang Bi's commentary on the hexagrams *jiji* and *weiji*, see Richard Lynn, *The Classic of Change*, pp. 538-551. For a discussion of Wang Bi's commentary on the two hexagrams, see Tze-ki Hon, "Northern Song *Yijing* Exegesis and the Formation of Neo-Confucianism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1992), pp. 39-45.

[41] *Zhouyi kouyi*, "Xugua" (Sequence of Hexagrams), p. 28a.

[42] In explaining the significance of the hexagram *weiji*, Hu Yuan has a great deal to share with Wang Bi. Although not as elegantly written as Wang Bi's exegesis, Hu Yuan also takes the

man realm is in constant flux and in an incessant process of becoming. Any careless act can be detrimental, if not disastrous. Hence, man has to be prudent and circumspect in his acts. He has to expect danger when he is still secure, and plan for emergencies when everything is still in order. He has to be constantly self-reflective and self-critical in order to ensure his comfort and fortune. From this perspective, the entire text of the *Yijing* is meant to sharpen its readers' awareness of the contingent nature of the human world. Although it is divided into sixty-four hexagrams, three hundred and sixty lines, and the *Ten Wings*, the goal of the classic is to urge prudence in action. Precisely for this reason, the imperfect hexagram *weiji* is a better ending of the classic than the perfect hexagram *jiji*. While ending with the hexagram *jiji* gives readers a wrong impression that it is possible to establish a perfect order once and for all, the hexagram *weiji* reminds readers that they have to constantly search for a perfect order on earth. For Hu, the "profound lesson" in the ending of the *Yijing* is that human beings are in a constant process of renewing themselves and their social and political structure.

Human Activism *versus* Predeterminism

Underlying Hu Yuan's attempt to read the *Yijing* as a classic on human affairs was his belief in human activism. He believed that human beings, although to a great degree influenced by their environment, could take an active role in shaping their lives. He also believed that, as part of the universe, human beings were already fulfilling their cosmic mission by improving their social and political order. For Hu, since the universe is actively renewing itself with the interaction of the *yin* force and the *yang* force, human beings should be actively renewing themselves as well.

Hu's belief in human activism was at odds with the early Northern Song fatalism. Shaped by their experiences in the Five Dynasties when political power changed hand five times in less than sixty years, the early Northern Song emperors and high officials believed that human affairs were predetermined. They believed that human beings were forever barred from understanding the intent of heaven. What human beings could do was to follow what heaven had decided, known as the "mandate of heaven" (*tianming* 天命). For instance, partly to justify his rule, emperor Taizu 太祖 (r. 960–975) discussed repeatedly how he was put on the throne by heaven. Referring to the palace *coup d'état* in 960 that started the Song and to numerous occasions where he almost lost his life, emperor Taizu remarked that "the rise to power of an emperor depends on the mandate of heaven, neither can one seek for heaven's mandate nor can one refuse it."[43] A few decades later, emperor Zhenzong went a step further in showing how heavily

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hexagrams *jiji* and *weiji* as a unit, symbolizing human precariousness in a contingent and ever-changing world. For a brief comparison between Wang Bi and Hu Yuan, see Tze-ki Hon, "Northern Song *Yijing* Exegesis and the Formation of Neo-Confucianism," pp. 39-45, 79-80.

[43] *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 1:30; *Songshi*, 49. See also Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, *Song lun* 宋論, *Guoxue jiben congshu* ed. (Taibei: Commercial Press, 1968), pp. 1-3.

human affairs were determined by the "mandate of heaven." Having secured the northern borders by signing the treaty of Shanyuan with the Khitan in 1004,[44] emperor Zhenzong indulged himself in receiving "the heavenly writings" (*tianshu* 天書) – supposedly a sign from heaven with specific instructions on governing. Orchestrated by the minister Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (960–1025), emperor Zhenzong spent years on the road paying tribute to heaven by visiting sacred sites and mountains.[45] Likewise, many high officials of the early Northern Song such as Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982) and Xue Juzheng 薛居正 (912–981) continued to adopt the fatalistic world-view of the scholar-officials in the Five Dynasties. They passively accepted whatever came to them, and seldom asserted themselves in changing the course of events.[46] A poem by Feng Dao 馮道 (882–954), which remained popular among scholar-officials until the early part of the eleventh century, illustrates this fatalistic world-view of many high officials of the early Northern Song:

> Poverty and prosperity are all determined by the mandate [of heaven].
> We have no need to sigh in sorrow.
> So long as we keep performing good deeds,
> We need not ascertain the future.
> When winter passes away, the ice will melt.
> When spring comes, the grass will grow.
> I invite all of you to observe this principle.
> The Way of Heaven will be abundantly clear.[47]

By rendering the *Yijing* into a classic on human activism, Hu Yuan intended to challenge this fatalistic view of the early Northern Song. He wanted to replace the passive, receptive attitude to life with one that stressed active involvement in changing the social and political order. More importantly, by articulating a dynamic cosmological view based on a reading of the *Yijing*, he sought to give the scholar-literati – who entered the Song government in huge numbers since the 990s – the confidence to participate in ordering the world.

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[44] On the significance of the treaty of Shanyuan, see Jing-shen Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations* (Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 1988), pp. 10-24.

[45] *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 67:1506-1507, 68:1518-1530, 70:1560-1583; *Songshi*, pp. 135-145; *Songshi jishi benmo*, pp. 162-164. For a biography of Wang Qinruo, see M. Yamauchi, "Wang Ch'in-jo," in: *Sung Biographies*, pp. 1105-1109.

[46] On Wang Pu's fatalism and its similarity with Feng Dao's, see Hong Mai 洪邁, *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), pp. 516-517. On Xue Juzheng's fatalism, see Tze-ki Hon, "Military Governance versus Civil Governance," pp. 89-92. For the biographies of Wang Pu and Xue Juzheng, see *Songshi*, pp. 8799-8802, 9109-9110.

[47] Feng Dao's poem appears in: Wu Chuhou 吳處厚, *Qingxiang zaji* 青箱雜記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p. 16. The original of the poem runs as follows: 窮達皆由命，何勞發嘆聲？但知行好事，莫要問前程。冬去冰須泮，春來草自生。請君觀此理，天道甚分明。 Wu Chuhou reported that until his time (around the 1080s) Feng Dao's poem remained popular among the scholar-officials. An apologist for Feng Dao, he argued that Feng was a capable minister with superb skills in administration (pp. 16-17).

Sage *versus* Hermit

A recurring theme in the *Zhouyi kouyi* was sagehood. Repeatedly, Hu Yuan read the *Yijing* – sometimes at risk of twisting the text – as a treatise on the meaning of sagehood. In Hu's mind, there was no doubt that the *Yijing* stood out among other ancient classics because of its emphasis on sagehood. For him, the discussion of sagehood in the *Yijing* begins with its first hexagram, *qian* (The Creative). In commenting on the line statement referring to the first line of the hexagram, "Hidden Dragon. Do not act,"[48] he states:

> "Hidden Dragon" here means the *yang* force is not manifest and remains in a hidden ground. "Do not act" is the sagacious writer's warning to posterity not taking "hidden Dragon" as a virtue.
>
> Why is it said like this? It is because man with his embodiment of the finest spirit of the Five Agents is born to be the most spiritual being among the myriad things. Yet among us, fools and unworthy are always in the majority, and wise and capable persons are often in short supply. Sages, with their embodiment of the completely refined virtue and with their endowment of the purity of heaven, are far more superior to the wise man. With his quality, a sage will penetrate all things and illuminate all events. Hence, a sage should make himself available to society. It is appropriate for him to complete his worldly enterprise by giving assistance to the emperor, bringing welfare to the people, and facilitating the myriad things. This is why the *Wenyan*[49] says: "A superior man will practice his virtue in actions. Every day one can see him in actions." Nowadays, those who have sagacious virtue and intelligence hide themselves from human affairs. Then, who is going to administer the fools and the unworthy in this world? [It is clear that those who choose to hide themselves] do not know the divine purpose of having sages on earth.[50]

Hu's interpretation of this line is unconventional. For most *Yijing* commentators since the sixth century, the line had been taken to mean that one must retreat from political activity when the government is in disarray. In the *Zhouyi zhengyi*, for instance, Kong Yingda cited emperor Shun 舜 (a farmer) in ancient antiquity and emperor Gaozu of Han 漢高祖 (a junior military officer) in the second century B.C.E. as examples of "hiding dragons," abstaining from serving the crumbling state.[51] The strongest textual evidence for this kind of interpretation comes from Confucius' exhortation in the *Analects* to hide in times of misgovernment.[52]

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48 Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 7.

49 The *Wenyan* 文言 is one of the *Ten Wings* of the *Yijing*. Divided into two parts, the *Wenyan* offers additional commentary on the first two hexagrams, *qian* and *kun*. Here Hu Yuan is referring to the *Wenyan* of *qian*.

50 *Zhouyi kouyi*, 1:5b-6a.

51 *Zhouyi zhengyi*, p. 311.

52 In the *Analects*, Confucius exhorts withdrawal from human affairs on the following occasions: 1. The Master said, "The Way makes no progress. I shall get upon a raft and float out to sea" (*Analects* 5:6; Arthur Waley [trans.], *The Analects of Confucius* [New York: Vintage Books, 1938], p. 108).

For Kong, "Hidden Dragon. Do not act" was a re-statement of Confucius' well-known maxim: "When the Way prevails under Heaven, then show yourself; when it does not prevail, then hide."[53] In this regard, Hu's interpretation of the line as not following the example of a hidden dragon is not only at odds with the received understanding of the line statement, but also casts doubt on the projected image of Confucius as an advocate of protesting by reclusion.

In addition, Hu's interpretation directly goes against his own actions. Having spent ten years hiding on Mount Tai pondering the classics and discarding family letters upon seeing the words "peaceful and contented," does he not seem to be a hermit? Having not passed the civil service examinations to become an official to serve the state, does he himself ever help in managing human affairs? Although we do not have any historical evidence on Hu having been criticized for being a hermit, judging by the furor centered upon Sun Fu (Hu's studymate on Mount Tai) for his being a hermit,[54] it is possible that the same accusation could have been made against him. Then, the questions for us are as follows: given his precarious position as a semi-hermit, why does Hu speak of a sage as not being a hermit? Why do being a sage and being a hermit have to be antithetical? How does Hu perceive his hiding on Mount Tai as categorically different from ordinary recluses?

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2. The Master said to Yen Hui, "The Maxim 'When wanted, then go; When set aside, then hide' is one that you and I could certainly fulfil" (*Analects* 7:10; Waley, p. 124).

3. The Master said, "Be of unwavering good faith, love learning, if attacked be ready to die for the good Way. Do not enter a State that pursues dangerous courses, nor stay in one where the people have rebelled. When the Way prevails under Heaven, then show yourself; when it does not prevail, then hide. When the Way prevails in your own land, count it a disgrace to be needy and obscure; when the Way does not prevail in your land, then count it a disgrace to be rich and honoured" (*Analects* 8:13; Waley, p. 135).

For a further discussion of the Confucian justification of reclusion, see Charles Wing-hoi Chan, "Confucius and Political Loyalism: The Dilemma," in: *Monumenta Serica* 44 (1996), pp. 25-99; Li Chi, "The Changing Concept of the Recluse in Chinese Literature," in: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 24 (1962/1963), pp. 234-247; Frederick Mote, "Confucian Eremitism in the Yüan Period," in: *The Confucian Persuasion*, ed. by Arthur F. Wright (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 202-240. For a comparison of the concept of eremitism among the Confucians, Daoists, and Chinese Buddhists, see Wolfgang Bauer, "The Hidden Hero: Creation and Disintegration of the Ideal of Eremitism," in: *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values*, ed. by Donald J. Munro (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1985), pp. 157-197.

53 *Analects* 8:13; Waley, p. 135.

54 Sun Fu was invited to serve in the government only after his student Shi Jie had defended his eremitism (see *Songshi*, p. 12833, and *Song Yuan xue'an*, 2:2-3). The editors of the *Song Yuan xue'an* related this episode to Shi Jie's essay, "On Reclusion" ("Ming yin" 明隱, now preserved in full in: *Culai Shixiansheng wenji* 徂徠石先生文集 [Bejing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984], pp. 95-96). In the essay, Shi explained the differences between Sun Fu's retreat at Mount Tai and the retreats of other hermits. He argued that Sun Fu's stay at Mount Tai was not a real retreat, but a preparation for an upcoming opportunity to serve the state. It is intriguing to notice that Shi's argument in "Ming yin" is exactly the same as Hu Yuan's interpretation of "hidden dragon."

It is in light of these questions that Hu's critique of Kong Yingda's interpretation of "hidden dragon" becomes insightful. He says:

> In [Kong Yingda's] sub-commentary, the examples of emperor Shun farming on Mount Li, and Gaozu of Han being a junior military officer at River Si are cited [to elucidate the meaning of "hidden dragon"]. Were they hiding themselves? No, they were only cultivating and completing their virtues. At times, do sages not also find it imperative to hide themselves? Yes, but the fact is that they know the Way in them is yet to be implemented, and their mission is far from being fulfilled, so they engage in learning to cultivate and complete their sagely virtues, and implement them later in the whole world. They are never satisfied with spending their whole life in mountains and forests. Yet, there are occasions in which the entire government is in disarray. These are indeed times for hiding. That is why the *Doctrine of the Mean* says: "The Way of the superior man is abstruse and wondrous." Be that as it may, it is still not hiding oneself. It is only hiding one's body without forsaking one's mission. It is done by not giving one's private interest precedence over the public good.[55]

In the above, Hu Yuan presents two contrasting views on being a hermit. On the one hand, he outlines the conventional position as expounded by Kong Yingda; that is, being a hermit is permissible in time of misgovernment. On the other hand, he enunciates his own perspective on the issue; that is, being a hermit is morally wrong regardless of the state of government. Through rounds of questions and answers, Hu gradually brings to the fore the central point of contention between these two positions – what is meant by being a hermit? For him, it is of course permissible for one to refrain from serving the state when it is already in disarray. Moreover, he does not find it objectionable to seclude oneself in the mountains as a sign of protest. On these two points, he shares the conventional view on being a hermit. Yet, what separates him from the others is the purpose of hiding. At this crucial juncture, Hu introduces a distinction between "hiding one's body" and "forsaking one's mission." For him, a sage hiding on a mountain (like his stay on Mount Tai) is only hiding one's body but not forsaking one's mission. The hiding sage spends all of his time in seclusion, preparing himself for his upcoming opportunity to serve the public. By contrast, a hermit is one who hides on a mountain to sever all connections with human affairs, content with devoting the remainder of his life to his own enjoyment. For a sage, hiding on a mountain is only a compromise in times of trouble, a temporary retreat for a more meaningful service in the future. For a hermit, hiding on a mountain is his renunciation of his duties to humankind, and his declaration of the pursuit of happiness for himself. The distinction between the two lies less in the act of hiding than in whether one gives precedence to the public good or to private interest.

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[55] *Zhouyi kouyi*, 1:7b–8a.

Opposing the Practice of Honoring the Hermits

It is important to notice that Hu's interpretation of "hidden dragon" was aimed at the tenth-century practice of honoring the hermits. In Hu's times, being a hermit was considered to be a lofty undertaking, an expression of one's supreme intelligence. Famous hermits, such as Chen Tuan 陳摶 (895–989) and Zhong Fang 种放 (955–1014), were regarded as wise men who possessed foreknowledge about the future and led their lives in complete harmony with the grand scheme of the universe.[56] As the editors of the *Songshi* have pointed out, this respect for eremitism in the tenth century was in part a response to the rapid change of government (five times in less than sixty years) during the Five Dynasties period.[57] By withdrawing themselves from society and enduring the hardship of living alone in the mountains, the hermits were thought of as performing a moral act, protesting against corrupted governments and irresponsible rulers. One example illustrating this respect for eremitism was the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Digest of the Reign of Grand Tranquility). Completed in 983 under the order of emperor Taizong and an epitome of the highest level of scholarship of the time,[58] the *Taiping yulan* contained a full section on hermits, along with sections on loyal officials, devoted relatives, and necromancers. The section brought together all the important statements throughout history concerning the importance of eremitism.[59] Another example of this tenth-century predilection was the early Northern Song emperors' policy of honoring the hermits. To show that the Song government was categorically different from those in the Five Dynasties, the early Northern Song emperors (particularly emperors Taizong and Zhenzong) regularly granted audiences to the hermits in appreciation of their loftiness.[60] With their presence in court, the early Northern Song emperors

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[56] *Songshi*, pp. 13420-13426. For the biographies of Chen Tuan and Zhong Fang, see Shao Bowen 邵伯溫 (ed.), *Shao shi wenjian lu* 邵氏聞見錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), pp. 69-70; Zhu Xi 朱熹 (ed.), *Wuchao mingchen yanxing lu* 五朝名臣言行錄 (Taibei: Wenhai chubanshe), 10:1a-5a. For a discussion of Chen Tuan and Zhong Fang, see Don J. Wyatt, *The Recluse of Loyang: Shao Yung and the Moral Evolution of Early Sung Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), pp. 47-59.

[57] In an attempt to defend the tenth-century practice of honoring the hermits, the editors of the *Songshi* began the "Biographies of the Hermits" (*Yinyi zhuan* 隱逸傳) with a preface discussing why Chen Tuan and Zhong Fang were respected in their times (see p. 13417). The editors attributed the respect for eremitism to the political chaos during the Five Dynasties. Citing the line statements of hexagrams *gu* 蠱 (Decay, #18), *dun* 遯 (Retreat, #33), and *gen* 艮 (Keeping Still, #52), the editors argued that reclusion was considered a lofty undertaking at the time of the early Northern Song.

[58] Regarding how the *Taiping yulan* and its sister publication, the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 reflected the political vision of emperor Taizong, see Russell Kirkland, "A World in Balance: Holistic Synthesis in the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*," in: *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 23 (1993), pp. 43-70.

[59] *Taiping yulan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), pp. 2290-2324.

[60] *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 19:425; 25:588, 32:738, 52:1151-1152, 58:1273, 62:1394-1395, 66:1496, 73:1652; Jiang Shaoyu 江少虞 (ed.), *Songchao shishi leiyuan* 宋朝事實類苑 (Shang-

presence in court, the early Northern Song emperors wanted to prove that the Song had the moral support of the hermits, and the government was open-minded in seeking advice.[61] In this regard, Hu Yuan's interpretation of "hidden dragon" was aimed at correcting what he perceived as a widespread wrongdoing.

To fully understand how Hu Yuan rendered the *Yijing* to oppose the tenth-century practice of honoring the hermits, we need to examine his reading of the hexagram *gu* 蠱 (Decay, #18). In the tenth century, the hexagram *gu* was frequently evoked to justify eremitism. For example, in support of reclusion, the editors of the *Taiping yulan* began the section on hermits by citing the line statement of the top line of *gu*, which said: "He does not serve kings and princes, set himself higher goals."[62] For readers of the *Taiping yulan*, the line statement appeared to justify eremitism, rendering it as a lofty enterprise. For Hu Yuan, however, the line statement had nothing to do with eremitism. Rather, the line statement was about a graceful retirement of an official after spending his whole life serving in the government. Hu's commentary on the line statement reads as follows:

> In administering affairs, if one begins with care, then at the end his goals will be accomplished. ... If [an official] reaches high age when the government is in good order and the tasks of governing have been completed, he should be contented. Not being tempted by [the rewards in] high position, he should set himself higher goals by retiring from serving kings and princes.[63]

In his commentary, Hu read the line statement as an exhortation for graceful retirement of high-ranking officials. Rather than a justification for eremitism, Hu reads "not serving kings and princes" to mean an aging official yielding his power in the government to enjoy his retirement. Instead of glorifying the loftiness of a hermit, Hu reads "setting himself higher goals" to mean the retiring official's decision to give precedence to public good over his personal interest in power. Although we have no evidence to prove that Hu wrote this commentary in response to the *Taiping yulan*, it is apparent that in composing the commentary he had in mind what the line statement was taken to mean in his times.

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hai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 41:533-537; *Songshi*, pp. 58, 63, 72-73, 118-121, 128, 130, 140, 148-151, 13420-13426.

[61] A good example showing the intention of the early Northern Song emperors in receiving the hermits is Chen Tuan's attempt to explain away his reluctance in offering advice to the Song government. When pressed for advice during one of his visits to the imperial court, Chen responded that since the Song government was well-run and had brought peace to China after decades of chaos, he had nothing to offer to further improve the government. Apparently, emperor Taizong was satisfied with Chen's answer. The emperor immeditately promoted him to a higher rank and allowed him to return to the mountains a few months later. See *Songshi*, pp. 13420-13421.

[62] *Taiping yulan*, p. 2290. Note that similar to the *Taiping yulan*, the editors of the "Biographies of Hermits" of the *Songshi* also began their preface by quoting the same line statement of *gu* (see *Songshi*, p. 13417). The translation of the line statement of *gu* is from Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 78.

[63] *Zhouyi kouyi*, 4:22b.

As if Hu wanted to make certain that his tenth-century readers would fully comprehend his point, he ended his commentary on the top line of *gu* with a direct reference to the practice of honoring the hermits:

> It is unfortunate that today many of us take "higher goals" to mean not working for his family, respecting his parents, serving the government, being loyal to the emperor, and bringing benefits to the people. For them, having "higher goals" means withdrawing from society and hiding in the mountains. What they mean by "higher goals" is to keep company with animals, plants, and rocks. This is not the original meaning of the line statement of the top line of *gu*.[64]

In the above quotation, Hu makes clear that he opposes the practice of honoring the hermits. By referring to the hermits as the "companions" of animals, plants, and rocks, he underscores the danger of favoring eremitism – creating a lack of interest among scholar-literati in social and political affairs. For Hu, eremitism may be permissible or even respected in times of political chaos (such as the Five Dynasties). However, it should not be encouraged when a stable government (like that of the Song) is already in place. Times have changed, and social values should change accordingly.[65] Whether or not Hu is right about the original meaning of the line statement of the top line of *gu*, he uses the line statement to call his readers' attention to an outdated social practice, urging them to change it as soon as possible.

Sage for the Public

From a slightly different perspective, Hu's objection to eremitism is more than a critique of contemporary practice. It points as well towards a re-definition of what sagehood is. As one recalls, the main thrust of Hu's commentary on "hidden dragon" of hexagram *qian* centers on the notion that a sage has to dedicate himself to the public good. It is the sacrifice of one's personal interest for the sake of the common good that characterizes a sage – the highest stage for a learned man.

On the surface, there seems to be nothing new about Hu's notion of sagehood. Both the *Analects* and the *Mencius* have been unequivocal in presenting sagehood in this manner.[66] But what is significant about Hu's interpretation is that

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[64] *Zhouyi kouyi*, 4:23a.

[65] On many occasions, Hu Yuan discusses the importance of being timely. See, for example, his commentary on the hexagrams *dun* (Retreat, #33) and *gen* (Keeping Still, #52), the two hexagrams that the editors of the *Songshi* also cited in their preface to the "Biographical Section on the Hermits." Unlike the editors of the *Songshi*, Hu argues that the two hexagrams only give conditional justification for eremitism. He stresses that if the time is not suitable to save the world by serving the government then one should hide, but if the time is right then one has to serve the government. See *Zhouyi kouyi*, 6:17b-22b; 9:9a-10b.

[66] In the *Analects*, Confucius' discussion of the concept of *ren* 仁 (altruism) is clearly centered upon one's commitment to serve the public. The classic example is the Master's dialogue with his student Zigong (or Tzu-Kung) on the concept of *ren* (translated by Waley as goodness): "Tzu-Kung said, 'If a ruler not only conferred wide benefits upon the common people, but also

he was reiterating a standard Confucian notion of sagehood long since abandoned by the early Northern Song scholar-literati. For them, sagehood was the ideal state of a man who had freed himself from the captivity of mundane human affairs and who had formed one body with the natural order of the universe. They believed that a sage was no longer a human being, but a cosmic being; he was concerned about the habitual functioning of the entire universe, not just the changes in human society. Borrowing a Daoist term, they argued that a sage must be "non-active" (*wuwei* 無爲), one who acts without action, teaches without teaching, and manages the human affairs without management. A sage, in short, had to keep his distance from mundane human affairs, and comment on the world from afar without participating in it. For scholar-literati of the early Northern Song, learning to be a sage meant learning to go beyond human affairs for a spiritual union with the cosmos. For them, the hermits such as Chen Tuan and Zhong Fang were their living exemplars for a sage. This notion of sagehood – conflating a hermit with a sage – was precisely what Hu sought to refute in his interpretation of "hidden dragon."

By reiterating the standard Confucian notion of sagehood, Hu Yuan intended to inspire among his contemporaries an intense concern for the public good. Throughout the *Zhouyi kouyi*, taking care of the public was the single most important theme in Hu's discussion of sagehood. A case in point is his comment on the line statement of the sixth line of the hexagram *jing* 井 (Well, #48), "The well is ready to harvest. Do not cover it."[67] Hu comments:

> "Harvest" means the harvest of crops. "Cover" means to conceal. The Way of a well is to benefit man by letting him draw water from it. Now, the sixth *yin* line is at the top of the hexagram residing in a *yin* position. This is the Way of a well in full completion. This is comparable to able and superior men who, having accomplished their cultivation of virtue and embodiment of righteousness, extend their service to the world and benefit all things on earth. This is the Way of the superior man in full completion.
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> "Do not cover it" means that when the Way of a well is in full completion at the sixth *yin* line, then people from all over the world and travelers from all corners must be allowed to nourish themselves by drawing water from the well. The well

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compassed the salvation of the whole State, what would you say of him? Surely, you would call him Good?' The Master said, 'It would no longer be a matter of "Good." He would without doubt be a Divine Sage. Even Yao and Shun could hardly criticize him. As for Goodness – you yourself desire rank and standing, then help others to get rank and standing. You want to turn your own merits to account; then help others to turn theirs to account – in fact, the ability to take one's own feelings as a guide – that is the sort of thing that lies in the direction of Goodness'" (*Analects*, 6:28; Waley, p. 122). A similar argument is also found in the *Mencius*. The best example is the debate between Mencius and King Wei at Liang on various issues like kingship, altruism, and the original nature of man. See Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 60-61.

[67] My translation; Wilhelm's translation reads as follows: "One draws from the well without hindrance" (*The I Ching*, p. 188). Although accurate in conveying the general meaning of the line statement, Wilhelm's translation does not bring out its main idea – not covering the well (*wumu* 勿幕) when it is ready to harvest (*jingshou* 井收).

> cannot be covered for selfish reasons. This is comparable to a superior man, whose virtue is complete, who must extend his service to the world and let all mankind receive his benefits. He should not hide himself in the mountains and forests, and attain goodness for himself. He should not be stingy and should render service [to humankind].[68]

In this commentary, Hu takes "the well" and "to cover" metaphorically. The central theme of the commentary is to extend the *Yijing* statement to the issue of serving the public. By equating a well in full service with a superior man extending his service to humankind, Hu finds reason to condemn "the covering of a well," or the forsaking of one's duties to his fellow beings by hiding his talents. Hu makes his point clear that it is a sage's duty to serve the public.

In other cases, Hu's message is conveyed in the form of passionate exhortation. An example is found in his commentary on the *Xici* statement "[A man] is active everywhere but does not let himself be carried away."[69] Hu's commentary reads:

> A sage assumes the central position between heaven and earth, resides in a place facing south, eliminates his personal desires, and separates from vicious groupings. What he does is centered and just, straight and honest, treating the whole world as one family and the millions of people as having one single sentiment. Every act [of the sage] is done in accordance with the Way of Supreme Centrality.
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> Here "[A man] is active everywhere but does not let himself be carried away" is said, because a sage does not only aim at purifying himself. Equipped with his virtue of Utmost Centrality, a sage also seeks to align with heaven above, integrate with earth below, and unify with man in the middle. He does not have selfish desires and one-sided inclinations, nor is there anything beyond his concern. Even when he acts in the world, he is never selfish, errant, or deviant. All of this occurs because a sage is utmost fair and just.[70]

From the above depiction, a sage is not only an anthropocosmic being (like Chen Tuan and Zhong Fang), providing a link between man on the one hand, and heaven and earth on the other. More importantly, a sage is one deeply involved in human affairs. By "treating the whole world as one family and the millions of people as having one sentiment," a sage turns this world into his testing ground, proving and elevating himself through service to the public. Of course, the human world is full of vices, prejudices, and injustice. Anybody in it is at risk of being contaminated and debased. Yet, it is through countering human wickedness, transforming vices into good deeds, and providing care to others, that a sage completes his sagely mission.

Consistent with this argument that a sage has to complete his sagely mission in and through the human world, Hu specifies the basic criterion of judging sagehood. In commenting on the judgement statement of *tongren* 同人 (Fellowship

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[68] *Zhouyi kouyi*, 8:32b-33a.

[69] Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 295.

[70] *Zhouyi kouyi*, "*Xici* shang," pp. 31b-32a.

with Men, #13), "Fellowship with men in the open. Success. It furthers one to cross the great water. The perseverence of the superior man furthers,"[71] he writes:

> A superior man has the mind of altruism and righteousness, and the way of honesty and forgiveness. He begins with himself and extends his virtues to the people. Therefore, he never worries about himself, he worries about the world; he never rejoices for himself, he rejoices for the world. The justice of a superior man is to have every man on earth share his view and follow his way. Hence, the way of *tongren* is to benefit the justly superior man alone.[72]

In this, one finds ample echoes of Fan Zhongyan's well-known maxim that men of letters should be "first in worrying about the world's troubles and last in enjoying its pleasures."[73] Expressed in a fashion remarkably similar to Fan, Hu argues that the criterion of a sage is: "he never worries about himself, he worries about the world; he never rejoices for himself, he rejoices for the world." For both Fan and Hu, a sage must give priority to the public interest. It is by transcending one's selfishness, expanding one's horizon to embody others' interests, and taking service to others as service to oneself, that a man can reach the highest plane of humanity – sagehood. And this similarity in outlook between the two persons might explain why Fan Zhongyan was the first high-ranking official who had invited Hu Yuan, then still a semi-hermit, to teach publicly. As the historian Qian Mu has noted, it was with Fan Zhongyan in the government implementing the *Qingli* 慶歷 reform in 1044–1045 and with Hu Yuan at schools teaching students new values that a public-serving spirit was ushered in among the early Northern Song scholar-literati.[74]

The Mission of the Civil Bureaucrats

In stressing a public-serving spirit among the scholar-literati, one may say that Fan and Hu were articulating the mission of the tenth-century civil bureaucrats. As Peter Bol has pointed out, the civil bureaucrats in the tenth and eleventh century were substantially different from the scholar-officials of the large aristocratic clans from the sixth century to the ninth century.[75] While the civil bureaucrats

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71 Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, p. 56.

72 *Zhouyi kouyi*, 3:33a-b.

73 Fan Zhongyan, "Yueyang lou ji" 岳陽樓記, in: *Fan Wen Zheng Gong ji* 范文正公集, *Guoxue jiben congshu* ed. (Taibei: Commercial Press, 1986), p. 95. See also the following two articles by James T.C. Liu, "An Early Sung Reformer: Fan Chung-yen," in: *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. by John King Fairbank (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 105-131; "Some Reflections on Fan Chung-yen (989–1052)," in: *A Festschrift in Honor of Professor Jao Tsung-i on the Occasion of His Seventy-fifth Anniversary* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1993), pp. 293-300.

74 Qian Mu, *Guoshi dagang* 國史大綱 (Taibei: Commercial Press, 1956), pp. 396-398. See also Qian Mu, *Song Ming lixue gailun*, pp. 30-31.

75 Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* pp. 1-15.

earned wealth and power by passing the civil service examinations and working in the government as officials, the aristocratic scholar-officials inherited wealth and power from their families, including their positions in the government. For the civil bureaucrats, their personal interests coincided with those of the government. They flourished only when the government was stable and a structure of recruitment was in place. By contrast, the aristocratic scholar-officials paid a premium on protecting family interests. Although in many instances to protect the interest of one's family involved protecting the interest of the imperial court, the aristocratic scholar-officials never doubted that perpetuating the family interests always took precedence over perpetuating the interests of the state.[76]

Among the top officials in the Five Dynasties period and in the early decades of the Northern Song, many of them were the aristocratic scholar-officials. A good example is Feng Dao. He was willing to serve in four dynasties in the Five Dynasties period to perpetuate his family interests. In the preface to his "A Self-Portrait of the Ever-Happy Old Man," he presented himself as a contented old gentleman who was proud of watching his family flourish under him.[77] Although Feng Dao is now widely known to us as an "unethical man" because of Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 (1007–1072) inflammatory biography of him,[78] we should not lose sight of the fact that he continued to earn respect from the early Northern Song emperors and top officials at least until 1032.[79] One reason for this was that Feng Dao personified many top officials in the early decades of the Northern Song government who traded their loyalty to an imperial court in order to perpetuate their family interests. A characteristic of these early Northern Song officials was that they took a passive role in policy-making, following rather than initiating orders. Unwilling to risk their careers in policy disputes, they never challenged the emperors openly, even though they might harbor different opinions. A case in point is the prime minister of emperor Taizu, Fan Zhi 范質 (911–964). Having served the last three dynasties in the Five Dynasties period, Fan Zhi was one of the leading officials helping to establish the Song government in the first few years after its establishment. In an overt attempt to earn favor from emperor

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[76] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-75.

[77] A portion of Feng Dao's preface to "A Self-Portrait of an Ever-Happy Old Man" is preserved in the biography of Feng Dao in: Xue Juzheng, *Jiu Wudai shi* 舊五代史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), pp. 1661-1664.

[78] See *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), pp. 612-615.

[79] The early Northern Song emperors continued to pay respect to Feng Dao by regularly granting official titles to his descendents. This practice continued as late as 1032; see *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 111:2583. The policy of honoring Feng Dao appears to have stopped in 1051 after emperor Renzong refused to grant the great-grandson of Feng Dao a government title after his submission of Feng Dao's policy papers to the government. See *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 171:4108. On why Feng Dao was popular among scholar-officials during his lifetime and a hundred years after his death, see Wang Gung-wu, "Feng Tao: An Essay on Confucian Loyalty," in: *Confucian Personalities*, ed. by Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 123-145; Lin Yongqin 林永欽, *Qiqiang Kongzi - Feng Dao* 騎牆孔子 — 馮道 (Taibei: Qiuda wenhua gufen youxian gongsi, 1989), pp. 3-4, 155-163.

Taizu, Fan Zhi recommended the abolition of the practice of the emperor holding regular meetings with the prime minister, giving the emperor all the power he needed to decide policies. As the top official in the first few years of the Song government, Fan Zhi acted like an imperial secretary copying meticulously every word uttered by emperor Taizu, for fear of misrepresenting his orders.[80] Another example is Zhao Pu 趙普 (922–992), who served as the prime minister of emperor Taizong. Joining the Song as a former official of the Zhou (the last dynasty in the Five Dynasties period), Zhao Pu was more assertive a prime minister than Fan Zhi. Yet, he never confronted emperor Taizong openly. His strategy for letting his views known was by repeatedly sending the same document to the emperor until it was accepted. If the emperor was irritated (in one case, Taizong tore his document into pieces), Zhao Pu would stop pursuing the subject and not mention it again until the following day.[81] The passivity among the top officials appeared to continue during the reign of emperor Zhenzong. When the emperor engaged himself in extravagant travels to show off the "heavenly writings" and to pay tribute to sacred sites and mountains, none of the top officials dared to question his decision. One top official, Wang Dan 王旦 (957–1017), was reported to be ashamed of himself for not attempting to oppose the emperor's self-indulgence.[82]

In sharp contrast to the passivity and self-serving attitude of the aristocratic scholar-officials in the early decades of the Song, the civil bureaucrats of Fan Zhongyan's generation believed that they "ruled the world with the emperor." Entering into the bureaucracy through passing the civil service examinations, the civil bureaucrats in the 1040s thought that they had the responsibility to improve the government in order to ensure its longevity. They regarded advancing the interests of the government as important as, if not more important than, advancing their own. With James Liu's study, it is now well known how the idealism of Fan's generation was expressed in the short-lived *Qingli* reform in 1044–1045.[83] Encapsulated in Fan's ten-point proposal, the civil bureaucrats in the 1040s attempted to reconstitute the social and political structure of the Song to avoid the impending fiscal and military crises. Although it lasted only for a year and a half, the *Qingli* reform set the stage for even more aggressive reforms during the reign

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80 *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 5:118; *Songshi*, pp. 8973-8976.

81 *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 14:306; *Songshi*, pp. 8931-8941.

82 *Songshi jishi benmo*, pp. 161-176; Wen-hsiung Hsü, "Wang Tan," in: *Sung Biographies*, pp. 1147-1153. Although there is no direct discussion of the obsequious silence of the high officials toward emperor Zhenzong's extravagant travels in the *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, one can infer that the editor Li Tao was sensitive to the issue. He reported twice that the court instructor Sun Shi 孫奭 (962–1033) protested against emperor Zhenzong's travel (74:1699; 82:1850). By registering Sun's protest but mentioning no action by other top officials, Li Tao implied that there was a lack of effort among top officials to oppose emperor Zhenzong.

83 James Liu, "An Early Sung Reformer: Fan Chung-yen," *op. cit.*

of emperor Shenzong 神宗 (1068–1085).[84] What is less well-known but perhaps equally important was the controversy that took place in 1032 surrounding emperor Renzong's decision to demote empress Guo. Risking their careers if not their lives, the young censors Fan Zhongyan and Kong Daofu 孔道輔 (986–1039) stood up to oppose the emperor's decision by protesting in front of the imperial palace. Also putting their careers on the line, other censors and officials lent support to Fan and Kong, when the emperor sent his prime minister to reiterate his decision to the protesting censors. When the emperor decided to punish the outspoken censors and officials, many of them took the punishment without regret, regarding it their duty to suffer for the just cause.[85] This self-sacrificing spirit of the civil bureaucrats shocked not only the young emperor Renzong (who just began to rule after eleven years of empress Liu's regency), but also many of the high officials. So used to follow orders from emperors, many of the high officials could not comprehend why the young censors and officials were eager to give up their future to protest a seemingly minor decision of emperor Renzong.[86]

Conclusion

We do not know whether, in commenting on the *Yijing*, Hu Yuan had the demotion of Empress Guo or the *Qingli* reform in mind. But it is clear that in the *Zhouyi kouyi* he expressed the idealism of the civil bureaucrats and their desire to participate in the broad social and political changes in the early Northern Song. When he said that "[a sage] never worries about himself, he worries about the world; he never rejoices for himself, he rejoices for the world," he captured the self-sacrificing spirit of Fan's generation in their attempt to order the world. By defining a sage as a public-spirited person who treated "the whole world as one family and the millions of people as having one sentiment," he gave voice to the mission of the civil bureaucrats of the 1030's and 1040's, who believed that they ruled the world with the emperor.

In this regard, Hu Yuan's discussion of sagehood in the *Zhouyi kouyi* was never a repetition of the past but a direct attempt to address the contemporary

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[84] For a discussion of the reforms during the reign of emperor Shenzong, see James T.C. Liu, *Reform in Sung China: Wang An-shih (1021–1086) and his New Policies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959); see also the chapters by George Hatch, Paul J. Smith, and Peter K. Bol, in: *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, ed. by Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer. Studies on China 16 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 39-192.

[85] *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 113:2642-2645; *Songshi*, p. 197; *Songshi jishi benmo*, pp. 193-198.

[86] In a letter to Yin Zhu 尹洙 (1001–1046), Ouyang Xiu described the disbelief of many high officials after watching one young official after another volunteer to accept punishment along with Fan Zhongyan. Ouyang claimed that for decades the high officials were used to remain silent to the emperor's decisions, they could not believe their eyes when they saw so many young officials give up their careers in protest. See Wang Pizhi 王闢之, *Yingshui yantan lu* 蠅水燕談錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 15.

needs. The sagehood of the *Zhouyi kouyi* was meant for the civil bureaucrats who increasingly controlled the Song government. It was to remind the civil bureaucrats that the regularity in nature was applicable to human society, and human beings were capable of constructing a social and political structure as lasting as the natural system. Of course, political in-fighting and factional struggles following the *Qingli* Reform showed that the civil bureaucrats might have overlooked the complexity of politics and overestimated their power to change the world. Yet, as captured vividly in Hu's *Zhouyi kouyi*, the civil bureaucrats of the 1030s and 1040s were determined to part ways with the aristocratic scholar-officials, who had dominated the political scene for centuries. After decades of efforts by the Song emperors to replace military governance with civil governance, finally the civil bureaucrats had formed a new identity that separated them from their predecessors. They wanted to join the Song emperors in founding a lasting social and political institution that would bring harmony and unity to the world.