

A Study of the Gansu Official Hu Xin and his Collection Yu Fen Cao in Microcosmic Perspective

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Abstract: *Hu Xin was a famous official in Tianshui, Gansu during the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty. He served in several branches of the central government, and his highest official position was that of the Supreme Leader of the Taichang Temple. Hu Xin's collection, Yu Fen Cao, documents his many initiatives to serve the people, impeach corrupt officials, and maintain national stability during his tenure. It reflects well on his political ambitions. Analyzing Hu Xin's historical contribution to the country and the people and his positive influence, we can further enrich the historical image of Hu Xin, and also provide historical details for understanding the prosperity and demise of the Donglin Party.*

Keywords: Hu Xin; Yu Fen Cao; Ming Dynasty.

1. INTRODUCTION

The image of traditional historical figures mostly relies on the language shaping of historical books and descendants. Due to the limitations of the times, limited availability of information and personal tendencies, It can make the political image of a historical figure one-dimensional and mislead the researcher into ignoring the complexity of that figure. Hu Xin's career was in the most extraordinary era of the Ming Dynasty, he put forward all kinds of ideas to save the rule of the Ming Dynasty, and when he resigned from his post, he devoted himself to promoting local education. As a result, he was a well-respected official in the Tianshui area.

Chinese academics are more interested in Hu Xin's former residence, such as the architectural features and historical value of the residence. No articles have been written on the political achievements and domestic aspects of Hu Xin. Therefore, the author studies the historical image of Hu Xin by interpreting his collected books.

2. THE LIFE JOURNEY OF HU XIN

Hu Xin, who is known as Mu Dong, was born in Qin Zhou Ma Paoquan in the Ming Dynasty. (Now is in Qin Zhou District, Tianshui, Gansu Province). According to the records in "Yu Fen Cao", he was born in the 35 years of Jiaping. In the fourth year of Wanli, he was elected as a local examination. In the 17th year of Wanli, he was a Jinshi and was served seven years of Linfen County in Shanxi Province. In the 38th year of Wanli, he served in Taichang Temple and resigned in the 42nd year of Wanli.

According to the Genealogy of the Hu, The first generation of the Hu family was called Hu Guoyong, born in the Fengyang area of Shanxi Province. Hu Guoyong once followed the emperor Zhu Yuanzhang to fight in a war and decided to settle in the area when he passed through Qinzhou. Hu Xin has been very smart since childhood. An weijun, an official of Qin'an County, commented on Hu Xin when he was writing the New Tongzhi of Gansu Province, he said: "Hu Xin is very intelligent, and although he is small in age, he is very calm when it comes to things and has great ambitions, which is very different compared to his peers." Hu Xin's epitaph records his experience in the imperial examinations. When Hu Xin's father, Hu Laijin, was the magistrate of Daxing County, he arranged for him to travel with a famous official, Shen Li, who praised Hu Xin's talent. In the 17th year of the Wanli reign, at the age of 33, Hu Xin passed the imperial examination. We can see Hu Xin's examination paper in the museum. The invigilator officials at that time thought that Hu Xin's answer sheet had beautiful handwriting and the thoughts of the essay were concise and clear, which made him a very good talent.

In the 17th year of the Wanli reign, Hu Xin was assigned to Linfen County in Shanxi Province as a governor. During his eight years in office, the social security problems in Linfen County were effectively solved. "There were no stranded prisoners in the prison, officials were not burdened with official duties, and the society was stable. The people called Hu Xin a parent official and cast statues to worship him."

Hu Xin returned to the central government in the 26th year of the Wanli reign. While serving as the Minister of Industry, he managed the maintenance of palaces, the construction of royal tombs, the management of the Yellow River floods, and the supervision of officials for corruption. While serving as a minister of military affairs, Hu Xin opposed the royal government's imposition of mining taxes on the people. In the 38th year of the Wanli reign, Hu Xin was promoted to the position of Junior Secretary of the Taichang Temple. He actively advised the emperor on sensitive issues such as disaster relief, determining the choice of the crown prince, and urging the Fu wang to travel to his fiefdom. Wanli forty-two years after the resignation, Hu Xin returned to his hometown to recuperate. During this period, there were still officials recommending him to serve as Secretary of the Dali Temple. Wanli forty-four years, Hu Xin died of illness at home.

3. ANALYZING HU TIKI'S POLITICAL AMBITIONS FROM YU FEN CAO

Hu Rujian, Hu Xin's son, collected his father's works and prepared them for publication and distribution. In the eleventh year of the Shunzhi period of the Qing Dynasty, Hu Rujian collected the complete collection, but it was unsuccessful due to lack of funds. In the twenty-third year of the Kangxi period, with the financial support of a number of officials, Hu Rujian succeeded in having his work published. Yu Fen Cao is divided into four volumes based on Hu Xin's tenure in the central government. The preface of the book is a description of Hu Xin's political achievements and an acknowledgement of his historical contributions by local officials. And the end of the book is an epitaph for Hu Xin. This book deals with many political hotspots during the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty, such as the corruption of officials, the struggle of different parties because of the interests of different groups, the problem of the succession to the throne, and the selection and reporting of cabinet members. These remarks show Hu Xin's political ambitions and life ideals in a comprehensive way. They also reveal to a certain extent the complex political situation and social livelihood in the middle and late Ming Dynasty.

3.1 Saving People from Heavy Burdens

In the first ten years of the Wanli Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty's commodity economy flourished as never before due to the vigorous reforms of Chief Minister Zhang Juzheng. Correspondingly, the proportion of social wealth possessed by the landlord class continued to increase. After the increase of income of the landlord class, the phenomenon of living in extreme luxury appeared among the landlord class, and the extravagance of the royal family was especially obvious. Wanli ten years later, the emperor Zhu Yijun mastered the power, the squandering of wealth is more serious. Luxury is manifested in many ways. For example, in terms of diet, the royal family required many extremely valuable ingredients. In clothing and jewelry, the materials used to make them were very expensive and the process of making them had to be ingenious. The weddings and funerals of the royal family also were very lavishly organized. In contrast, ordinary people need to face high taxes. In view of this, Hu Xin submitted a document to the emperor to reflect that collecting mining tax from the people was not conducive to social stability.

a) Hu Xin asked the emperor to alleviate the exploitation of the people.

In the twentieth year of the Wanli reign, there was a larger-scale rebellion in Ningxia in the northwest, and Korea in the northeast was invaded by Japan. In the 27th year of the Wanli reign, there was a rebellion in the Biaozhou region. Meanwhile, five important palaces of the Imperial Palace suffered fires of varying degrees of severity. After these incidents, the state needed to spend huge sums of money as a way to pay for the military expenses needed for the war, materials for repairing the palaces, etc. Because of the decrease in the savings of the state treasury, Emperor Zhu Yijun issued the following directive: "In recent years, the state has spent too much money on military expenses, and there is little property left in the state treasury, and the repair of palaces, the wedding expenses of the imperial sons and princesses, and the daily consumption of the palace are very large, so it is necessary to levy a tax on gold mines and a tax on silver mines on the whole country." After the emperor issued the order, eunuch retreats were dispatched to every province to supervise the officials in collecting taxes in a timely manner and then turning them over to the state.

Because the eunuchs were unsupervised after they left the palace and were given too much power by the emperor, the eunuchs plundered the people's property at the grassroots level with impunity. Hu Xin made a report to the emperor after collecting the crimes of the eunuchs: "Recently, abnormal weather phenomena have occurred in many places, such as solar eclipses and thunderstorms. These abnormal weather is the heaven's warning that the emperor has lost the hearts of the people. Excessive plundering of the people has led to the separation of the people from the local officials, the people are disillusioned with the government, and the warriors who dared to resist have

been imprisoned." Hu Xin asked the emperor to strictly manage and supervise the officials and remove those who behaved very badly. Hu Xin deeply appreciated the suffering of the people and dared to report to the emperor the truth that other officials did not dare to tell. This spirit was supported and admired by many upright officials.

The eunuch in charge of gold and silver mining taxes in the Shaanxi region was Zhao Qin, who reported to the emperor that the Qinzhou region of Gansu Province owed a total of 365 taels of gold mining taxes and more than 12,200 taels of silver mining taxes. When Hu Xin saw the report, he submitted a report to the emperor explaining the reasons for the delinquent gold and silver mining taxes in the Qinzhou region. Hu Xin said, "I am from Qinzhou, and therefore I would like to explain to you the difficulties of the mining tax in Qinzhou. Qinzhou is more remote, the land is barren and the people are very poor. Although silver can be dug out of Qinzhou, the veins in the area are very sparse, and it is already very difficult to pay the silver mine tax. There are absolutely no gold mines in this region." Hu Xin told Emperor Zhu Yijun all the truth about the delinquent mining tax in Qinzhou area, hoping that the tax in Qinzhou could be exempted. Because of Hu Xin's outstanding performance in the maintenance of the palace, the emperor made an exception and exempted the Qinzhou area from the gold mine tax. Hu Xin's behavior alleviated the burden of the local people, eased social conflicts, and contributed to maintaining the stable operation of the country.

b) Hu Xin emphasizes natural disasters across the country and is committed to post-disaster socio-economic recovery and reconstruction.

The Wanli Dynasty was in the "Ming and Qing Cosmic Period", a period of cold and dry weather. During this period, the incidence of natural disasters was very high everywhere, and the extent of the disaster was deeper and wider, such as the great drought and the great flooding. As a result, the social economy gradually withered, and disasters continued year after year, making life more difficult for the people.

Because most of the waterways around the region were in disrepair, the Yellow River breaks and the flooding of the River had a tremendous impact on the region. The break in the Yellow River directly affects the operation of the canal. The canal is the most important channel for the transportation of grain in the country. Its damage will affect the supply of grain and other important materials in the north. The breach would also lead to serious damage to the foundations of the royal burial complexes. Li Shun, the official who managed the flood disaster, was sick because he was overworked and needed immediate medical attention. Hu Xin requested the central government to mobilize relief funds and officials as soon as possible.

Hu Xin began his report by clarifying the urgency and necessity of managing flooding. He said, "On the one hand, the flooding disaster affects the safety of the emperor's tomb building, and on the other hand, the canal is the key to the country's food operation." Hu Xin made three recommendations: first, the areas with the most serious flooding disasters need to cast dikes in the upstream and dig ditches to drain water in the downstream areas. Second, local governments had run out of funds, and the emperor needed to send funds from the central treasury to local governments. Finally, the central government needed to quickly recommend officials with experience in river management. In addition to this, Hu Xin also called on the emperor to care for the people affected by the disaster. The emperor heeded his advice and called on government officials and royal concubines to donate money to the affected people.

3.2 Hu Xin Reported the Corruption of Some Officials to the Emperor.

Eunuchs were very powerful in the Ming Dynasty. They had interests entangled with several powers in the imperial court, so their power spread throughout the central and local governments. The development of eunuch power had a tremendous impact on many aspects of the Ming Dynasty, such as politics, economy, military and culture. Emperor Zhu Yijun was still very responsible for political affairs at first. But after he took the initiative, he chose to be passive. The reports of upright officials were often put aside by him, but he put a lot of trust in the words of eunuchs. The exploitation of the people by eunuchs was so serious that it triggered many rebellions. Therefore, Hu Xin actively reported the evil deeds of eunuchs to the emperor and impeached corrupt officials.

Ming Dynasty, the eunuchs rely on the emperor's trust in them, so that their own friends and relatives to open stores in the capital, in the palace procurement of goods or other business when profiteering. The eunuchs also used their privileges to exempt their stores from commercial service and to evade national taxes. Because of the many people involved and the complexity of the relationship, most officials did not dare to report. However, Hu Xin reported to the emperor immediately after learning about the eunuchs, exposing their evil deeds. Hu Xin said: "Zhang

Chengxun, Sun Lin, Wei Liangzuo by virtue of their status, for their own stores exemption, Lu Yingkui by virtue of his brother, Lu Yingshi exemption, Dong Zongmin to his father, a hundred Dong Yingyuan exemption ... the capital of the rich and powerful families have an excuse to exempt from the commercial service, and finally pay! The last ones to pay the merchant service are the poor and common people."

The emperor read the zhongshe asked him to formulate the governance of store business program, Hu Xin put forward measures to solve the problem: Hu Xin gave four suggestions. First, reduce the number of eunuchs and streamline the organization. Secondly, eunuchs collected taxes without quotas and exploited the people very seriously. Third, the purchasing of goods needed to be done personally and could not be done by eunuchs. Fourth, all merchants in the capital were categorized into nine classes according to their assets, and each class was subject to a different commercial tax. Although Hu Xin's advice was very practical, the emperor did not adopt it.

3.3 Hu Xin Constantly Petitioned the Emperor Over the Succession to the Throne.

Emperor Zhu Yijun on the determination of Zhu Changluo for the matter of the crown prince has not responded to because of favoring Consort Zheng. He wanted to abolish Zhu Changluo, Zheng concubine's son Fu Wang identified as the crown prince. This move was not in line with the traditional system of first-born son succession of the feudal dynasty, and at the same time was not conducive to the maintenance of national rule. The decision aroused fierce opposition from the officials. Cabinet members demanded that the emperor determine the candidate for the crown prince at an early date and educate him. Cabinet chief ministers Shen Shixing, Wang Xiju, Zhao Zhigao, and Ye Xianggao kept persuading the emperor.

a) Hu Xin requested the emperor to provide the necessary education for the crown prince.

In the royal family, every prince who succeeds to the throne needs to learn about governing the country. But Emperor Zhu Yijun refused to let the crown prince to learn how to govern the country. Zheng Guifei wanted her son to become the crown prince, so she advised the emperor to delay. The officials of the central government did not think so. The traditional first-born son inheritance system must not be destroyed by a woman. The position of the crown prince must not be shaken either. Yu Fen Cao contains a dozen of Hu Xin's reports urging the Crown Prince to receive an education.

According to Hu Xin, the crown prince is different from the officials, the sons of the people. The establishment of the crown prince determines whether society is stable or not. The education of the crown prince cannot be lacking. The crown prince was about to come of age and had not yet received formal education from the royal family, which was not conducive to the future management of the country's military and civil affairs. Moreover, even if the prince was gifted, it was no substitute for being able to understand the experience of previous emperors in ruling the country, and only through acquired education could he contribute to the country. Hu Xin's report emphasized the importance of education and lectures for the imperial son. Because of the fierce opposition of the courtiers, the emperor finally compromised, and Zhu Changluo, the eldest son of the emperor, went out to lecture in February of the 22nd year of the Wanli reign with the courtesy of the Eastern Palace, and was enthroned as the crown prince in the 29th year of the reign, and the conflict between the emperor and the courtiers was temporarily eased.

b) Hu Xin advised King Fu to travel to his fiefdom as soon as possible.

After the emperor decided on a candidate for the crown prince, the officials were still uneasy. Only after King Fu was invited to leave the capital and travel to his own fiefdom was this struggle between the emperor and the officials over. From the 29th to the 38th year of the Wanli reign, King Fu lived in the palace and did not travel to his fiefdom. Until the emperor fell ill, the officials were very frightened, fearing that the position of the crown prince would change. Hu Xin, in order to stabilize the position of the crown prince, submitted six reports to the emperor, hoping that the emperor would soon exhort King Fu to leave the palace and travel to his fiefdom.

Hu Xin's report was very sincerely and he cited examples of similar incidents in the previous dynasty to the emperor. He exhorted the Emperor to consider the long-term interests and focus on the national interests. Princess Zheng Guifei had said that she could not leave her son. But in front of the national interest, personal feelings needed to take a step back. Finally, in the 42nd year of the Wanli reign, King Fu left the palace for his own fiefdom. This struggle between the emperor and the officials ended in victory for the officials.

4. CONCLUSION

The political environment in the late Ming Dynasty with the emperor's negligence of the increasingly harsh, social conflicts intensified, most of the officials to participate in politics, the enthusiasm of the political discussion is seriously reduced. Hu Xin was able to submit so many reports during his term of office, which shows that he was an excellent official with integrity and boldness. Ninety zhangshi statement of the main relief of the people, make up for the official vacancy and rectify the initiative of the officials comprehensively demonstrated Hu Xin's official moral character and political aspirations, about the prevention and control of disasters, frugal expenditure initiatives reflect his pioneering spirit, about the party struggle of the speech shows that he is a clean and self-disciplined, not a party attached to the integrity of the officials.

Hu Xin insisted on taking the country as his own and on seeking the welfare of the people. His exhaustive efforts for the governance of society and the operation of the state fully reflect his patriotic feelings. At the same time, the spirit of "Yu Fen Cao" in the world of the world retains Hu Xin's advanced thinking. This is of great significance for recognizing Hu Xin's ideology and political talent, and for understanding the educational and historical conditions of northwest China in the Ming Dynasty.

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