

“胡言”惹祸？党争、夷夏  
观与余靖遭劾的始末

Treason by Bilingualism?  
Xenophobia, Clique, and  
the Impeachment of Yu Jing

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余靖（1000-1064）精通汉文和契丹文，而且与辽人交好，熟悉当地文化，是北宋与辽国外交上的一名重要使节。余靖优秀的双语能力让他在宋夏关系紧张之时发挥了不可取代的调解作用，然而，这个优点却似乎同时成为了他被宋廷猜忌以及贬谪的主因。史载余靖最终因为一首以契丹文书写、逢迎契丹统治者的胡语诗，被宋廷弹劾，后人亦多确信此事乃余靖取败之道。本文尝试从北宋政局入手，考索余靖被劾的真正原因。除了考证相关胡语诗的本事，也重新检视余靖因宋人夷夏观而被贬谪的论调，通过对于余靖政坛交往及当时宋廷党争的局面，归纳出余靖最终被贬谪，乃是因为其被政敌反复对付的结果。

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A gifted linguist, diplomat, and negotiator, Yu Jing (1000-1064) is uniquely qualified among Northern Song officials in his extensive knowledge of Khitan language and culture. At a time when Liao-Song relationship was at its most contentious, the advantage of having an official who could communicate fluently in both languages cannot be overstated. However, according to official history, not only did his bilingualism not endear him to the court, it aroused constant suspicion and led to his eventual impeachment, which occurred after he composed a poem in the Khitan language and presented it to the Emperor of the Liao State as a token of gratitude. The purpose of this paper is to reexamine the cause of Yu Jing's indictment in the context of political

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machination. By contextualizing his composition of the Poem in the Language of the Barbarian and subsequent impeachment within the politics of the court, my goal is to supplement, even challenge, our above conventional acceptance of xenophobia as the sole cause of Yu's downfall. In doing so, I hope to point out the potential flaw of our current understanding of Song diplomacy as guilelessly dictated by its inferiority complex and xenophobic sentiments.

**Key words:** Yu Jing; Liao-Song relationship; Barbaric Tongue Poem; xenophobia.

Sinicization describes the process in which traditional Han Chinese customs are incorporated into the daily lifestyle of non-Han Chinese societies. One of the high points of Sinicization occurred during the Song Dynasty, when steppe tribes like the Khitan and Jurchen embarked on a widespread practice of assimilating Chinese customs, ranging from religion to language to economic model, into their own cultural practices. The extent of its permeation was such that at least one Jin Emperor (Jin Shizong 金世宗 [1123-1189, reign 1161-1189]) became highly worried, and rightfully so, about the erosion of his traditional Jurchen identity by Chinese ideologies.<sup>1</sup> Historians sometimes cite this process of Sinicization as the main reason for the rise to prominence of the Liao and Jin empires.

By contrast, this same school of thought has traditionally pinpointed the Song state at the opposite end of this spectrum and viewed it as a politically enclosed entity which was deeply xenophobic and lacked self-confidence. In support of this view, the case of Yu Jing is often cited as a prime example of the Song's self-imposed enclosure. As an ambassador and a diplomat, Yu Jing visited Liao a total of three times.<sup>2</sup> According to *The Official Ceremonies and Customs of the Khitan People* 契丹官仪, a

<sup>1</sup> To counteract this problem, Emperor Shizong of Jin (1123-1189, reign 1161-1189) implemented a series of cultural policies designed to curb the further permeation of Chinese influence and the restoration of Jurchen heritage. For an in-depth study of these policies and their effects, see Mikami, 1973 and Xu, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> In his appendix to a 2000 edition of Yu Jing's *Collection of the Wu Creek* 武溪集, Huang Zhihui 黄志辉 raises the possibility that Yu actually visited Liao four times instead of three. However, he appears to have mistaken one of his return voyage for an additional outgoing trip - an error that has since been pointed out by Cao Jiaqi (2010).

treatment written by Yu based on his observation of Liao society, it was during one of these visits (presumably the first one) that he befriended his escort commissioners, who taught him “all there is to know about Khitan music and language” 尽得款曲言语 (Yu, 1976: 18.6). His linguistic abilities set him apart from other officials and no doubt helps explain why he was chosen as chief ambassador for consecutive missions. However, conventional wisdom also regards his bilingualism as the catalyst of his downfall. For instance, in his analysis of the complicated Liao-Song diplomatic relationship, James T. C. Liu (Liu Zijian) 刘子健 specifically points to the impeachment of Yu Jing as evidence of the xenophobia of the Northern Song ruling class, who “feared the Khitan on the one hand, and was suspicious of its ministers on the other” 怕契丹，猜疑臣下 (1987: 91). More recently, in his reevaluation of Yu’s political career, Cao Jiaqi 曹家齐 reaches a similar conclusion in his belief that Yu was the hapless victim of xenophobia and the victim of a political campaign which strived to preserve the state’s dignity 维护尊严的国体之争 (Yu, 1976: 172). It is fair to say that the case of Yu Jing has become synonymous with the idea of Song xenophobia.

At the center of Yu’s controversial impeachment is his composition of the Poem in the Language of the Barbarian, which was written during his third visit to Khitan territories as Song ambassador in honor of the Liao Emperor. The poem, which is first recorded by Liu Ban 刘攽 (1022-1088) in *Poetic Dialogue of the Middle Mountain* 中山诗话 (also known as the *Poetic Dialogue of Gongfu* 贡父诗话), contains four lines and twenty-eight characters. I cite it in full below:

The feast is was *meiluo* (grand) and I am deeply *baixi* (honored),

夜筵没罗臣拜洗

May that the *juehe* (friendship) between our two states continue to *ganle* (blossom);

两朝厥荷情干勒

My tongue is *yalu* (dull) but I wish you the best of *ruotong* (prosperity),

微臣雅鲁祝若统

May your highness forever enjoy *tiebai* (power) and *kete* (longevity).

圣寿铁摆俱可忒

As can be seen, the title of this poem is somewhat misleading as the poem is in fact a Chinese one in both linguistic and schematic terms. It does, however, contain eight Khitan vocabularies, rendered phonetically in Chinese characters, but they only make sense when they are read as part of the larger Chinese context. Interestingly, Yu was not the only Song official to have written a poem in this format (more on this later), but that he

was impeached for having composed this poem is widely acknowledged. A detailed account of his impeachment is given by both the *History of the Song Dynasty* 宋史 and the *Long Draft of the Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Governance* 续资治通鉴长编. Both texts unmistakably attribute his downfall to his composition of this poem. According to the *Long Draft*:

Yu Jing, who was Special Decree Official of the Secretariat, paid a total of three visits to the land of Khitan. He was an avid learner of foreign languages, and once composed a Poem in the Language of the Barbarian to honor the Liao leader. Wang Ping, who was Palace Censor, and Liu Yuanyu, who was Investigating Censor, condemned him for having dishonored his position as ambassador. They requested the Emperor to impeach him. Liu further pointed out that Yu has already been appointed Special Decree Official of the Secretariat, and thus should not be allowed to serve simultaneously as Counsellor. Two days later, Yu was banished to the Ji prefecture. (Li, 2004: 155.3772)

Although this passage does not specify that his impeachment occurred at the conclusion of his third and final visit to Khitan territories, this is obvious as there is no indication that he was ever summoned back to court after his banishment. In other words, had his impeachment occurred prior to his final ambassadorship, there would have been no way for him to participate in the third visit to the Liao state. This fact is important because, together with the severity of his punishment, it is often referenced by historians as evidence of the court's deeply ingrained xenophobia. The common belief is that the political environment of the time was so intolerant of bilingual ministers that the slightest hint of disloyalty was sufficient to get them impeached. Punishment would be swift and unforgiving. Until now, this narrative has seldom been called into question.

However, while xenophobia no doubt played a role in Yu's misfortune, the current practice of pinning his downfall solely on the court's anxiety regarding the foreign is misrepresenting, if not downright flawed. There are three pieces of evidence, never discussed in this context, which lend support to this claim. The first is concerned with the Rite of Farewell 朝辞. According to Song customs, before officials were allowed to leave the capital city to take up a position elsewhere, they were required to bid the

court an official farewell, a ritual known as the Rite of Farewell.<sup>3</sup> But in his “Letter of Gratitude to the Emperor for the Jizhou Appointment” 吉州谢上表, Yu laments that he was never given this opportunity prior to his hurried departure (1976: 14.6-8). Cao Jiaqi, whose biography of Yu Jing remains the only comprehensive treatment of Yu’s life and career to date, summarizes this incident in the following context:

Yu Jing left court for Ji Zhou in a hurry. Normally, before an official could leave court, he is required to take part in the Rite of Farewell during which he would receive instruction from the Emperor. But when Yu Jing received his orders, not only was he not given this opportunity, he also received explicit order to depart at once and take the shortest route possible. Yu Jing gathered his belongings in a hurry and traveled day and night. He arrived in Ji Zhou on the fourth day of the eighth month. (2006: 92)

Cao’s narrative provides a good summary of the way historians are accustomed to viewing this event - that by denying Yu the Rite of Farewell, it shows the seriousness of his “crime” and the furor of the Emperor at his “disloyalty”. What Cao and others do not seem to realize is that while the Rite of Farewell was no doubt an important custom, especially during the early decades of the Song dynasty, it was no longer upheld with the same degree of rigor since the reign of Emperor Zhezong 宋哲宗 (1077-1100, reign 1085-1100). According to Miao Shumei 苗书梅, because Emperor Zhezong ascended the throne at a very young age, it was not convenient for him and Grand Empress Dowager Gao 高太后 (1032-1093), who was the regent, to receive every incoming and outgoing officials. As such, a new policy was put in place so that only officials above a certain rank would be required to observe the Rite of Farewell. When Emperor Zhezong came of age and resumed the throne, he reinstated the Rites of Farewell as necessary for all outgoing officials. However, its implementation was no longer as strict as it used to be and officials were frequently exempted from this rite for a variety of reasons. Therefore, even though Yu was saddened by having his rights to the Rite of Farewell denied, it does not necessary reflect the seriousness of his offence. Plenty of officials, both before and after Yu, have left court without having performed this ritual.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in *Past Matters and Current Understanding* 耆旧续闻, Chen Hu 陈鹤 states clearly that “when an official is sent away, he is obliged to attend the Rite of Farewell to receive the Emperor’s order” 凡贵臣出守, 朝辞例有颁赐 (1980: 3.4990). For more information on the history and importance of this rite, see also Miao, 2007.

The second piece of evidence is found in the previous quote from *Long Draft*, which has somehow escaped scrutiny until now. According to this document, Yu Jing was simultaneously accused of not one, but two wrongdoings: his composition of the “offensive” poem and his concurrent appointment as Drafter of Imperial Edicts 知制诰 and Counsellor. While the former has attracted the lion’s share of attention, the latter is often left undiscussed. However, it is highly significant because, if his composition of the Poem in the Language of the Barbarian was really such an irredeemable affront, why did his accusers feel compelled to raise this second and somewhat trivial objection? Were his accusers simply being thorough? Or was their accusation spurred by a more calculated motive, in which a higher number of charges would mean a higher chance of Yu being impeached on one of them?

The third piece of evidence, which also happens to be the most important one, comes from Shen Kuo’s 沈括 (1031-1095) *Essays from the Dream Creek* 梦溪笔谈. Among stories recorded by Shen, there is one that concerned Diao Yue 刁约 (?-1082), who was a contemporary of Yu and has visited Liao as Song ambassador in 1056. According to this account, Diao was also a keen student of foreign languages and became fluent enough in Khitan to compose a poem in honor of his Khitan host. The poem, which is recorded in its entirety by both Shen and *History of the Song Dynasty* 宋史, is remarkably similar to Yu’s in that it features three to four Khitan nouns (there are some uncertainties as to whether the word *pili* 貔狸, from the last line, is of Khitan or Chinese origin) inserted among Chinese sentences. My translation of this poem is as follows:

It was a grand reception hosted by the *yili* (a Khitan official),  
押燕移离谈  
With *Hebazhi* (soldiers) standing guard all around;  
看房贺跋支  
Upon departure, I was awarded three *pilie* (a small wooden bowl),  
饯行三匹裂  
Together with ten rodents (*pili*).  
密赐十貔狸 (Shen, 2009: 25.283)

Although it is unclear what level of competency did Diao reach with his foreign language learning, his authorship of this poem is verifiable by various sources. More importantly, he was never impeached or penalized because of it. Diao’s ambassadorship is a demonstration of the court’s somewhat ambivalent position concerning the use of foreign languages. In addition,

it proves that the composition of poems in a non-Chinese language and the dedication of these poems to foreign leaders did not always constitute a treasonous act. This leads us back to our original question: What led to Yu Jing's impeachment? Especially if Yu was not the first Song official to compose such a poem and others who have done so before him were not impeached or even cautioned?

In order to find answer to this question, let us reexamine what we know of Yu's political career up to the point of his impeachment. At the age of twenty-four, Yu Jing earned the degree of *Jinshi* 进士 and was appointed the Commandant 尉 of Gan County 赣县 (present-day Jiangxi 江西), where he made a name for himself by suppressing local thieves and bandits. In 1034, following two other stops at the Xuan 宣州 and Hong 洪州 prefectures, he was summoned to the Capital and placed in charge of the Imperial library, where he oversaw the reannotation of such classics as *Records of the Grand Historian* 史记, *The Book of the Han Dynasty* 汉书, and *The Book of the Later Han Dynasty* 后汉书. It was during this time that he earned a reputation for being an intrepid counsellor. He showed incredible courage in frequently engaging the Emperor in heated arguments. On one such occasion, the debate allegedly became so intense that he accidentally spat his saliva onto the Emperor's face, who took it in good humor (Ding, 2003: 9.418-21). For his integrity, he became known alongside Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 (1007-1072), Wang Su 王素 (?-?), and Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012-1067) as the Four Virtuous Men 四贤.

At the time, Lu Yijian 吕夷简 (978-1044) was at the pinnacle of his power and liked to imagine Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061), who frequently disagreed with his policies, as members of an opposing clique. Although Yu Jing never became a member of Fan's inner circle - in their collected writings, there is no record of any exchange of letter between the two men - he first became associated with Fan in 1036 when the latter was impeached on the charge of harboring court factions. In the fifth month of that year, Fan famously presented Emperor Renzong 宋仁宗 (1010-1063, reign 1022-1063) with the diagram of one hundred ministers 百官图 and accused Lu Yijian of nepotism and machination in promoting many underserving officials. Lu retaliated by denouncing Fan for "overstepping his position, harboring faction, and cultivating alienation" 越职言事、勾结朋党、离间君臣 (Bi, 1982: 40.943). The tension quickly escalated into a political war and Emperor Renzong had no choice but to impeach Fan and demote him to Rao Zhou 饶州. Many ministers, in order to avoid further infuriating Lu, chose to act as Yin Zhu 尹洙 (1001-1047) did by "confessing" to having a relationship with Fan, in exchange for a less

severe punishment. Yu Jing alone stood up to Lu and implored the Emperor to reconsider Fan's impeachment.

In his defense of Fan Zhongyan, Yu Jing wrote a long petition which begins by praising Fan for having a “loyal heart and uncompromising virtues” 朴忠之心，直諒之節. Its tone quickly turns accusatory as it admonishes the Emperor for “thrice banishing the counsellor who spoke the truth” 三逐言事者. In the final passage, it urges the Emperor to rescind the decision to impeach Fan (1965: 32). For his efforts, Yu was also banished from the court. He was demoted to Yunzhou 筠州 in a new capacity as the local tax supervisor.

But despite this incident, Yu and Fan never became personal friends. In fact, throughout their political career, they seemed to disagree more often than they agree with each other. The following two incidents best illustrate the two men's divide. The first one occurred during the first Khitan-Tangut War (1044) when Emperor Jingzong of Western Xia 夏景宗 (1003-1048, reign 1038-1048) and Emperor Xingzong of Liao 辽兴宗 (1016-1055, reign 1031-1055) respectively sent envoys to Song to request alliance and support. Fan saw this occasion as an opportunity to eliminate the weaker of the two neighboring states - the Western Xia - and advocated siding with the Liao. In a statement written in the third month of 1043, he not only questions the sincerity of Emperor Jingzong's peace proposal, but further cautions against the possibility of a future Khitan-Tangut union which would be immensely unfavorable to the Song.<sup>4</sup> In the tenth month of that same year, Yu Jing, having just returned from his first visit to Liao, proposed a different strategy. From his visit, he realized that the animosity between the Tangut and Khitan ran much deeper than previously imagined. So instead of assisting Liao in the war against Western Xia, he argued that it would be much more advantageous to accept the Tangut's offer of a peace treaty, so that they could continue to pose a military threat to the Khitan. In the end, the Emperor accepted Yu's proposal over Fan's.

The second incident comes from their opinion on Di Qing 狄青 (1008-1057). Compared with Yang Ye 杨业 (923-986) or Yue Fei 岳飞 (1103-1142), Di Qing may not be the first name to come to mind when it comes to war heroes of the Song dynasty. However, as Elad Alyagon and many others have pointed out, in terms of military accomplishment and campaign triumph, Di has one of the most outstanding records among Song

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<sup>4</sup> Strangely, this letter is not recorded in *The Collection of Court Documents of Fan Zhongyan* 范文正公奏议, but its content is corroborated by and referenced in Yu Jing's *Wu Creek* (Li, 2004: 139.3348).

generals. Originally drafted into military service as a low-ranking officer, Di first rose to prominence under the command of Han Qi 韩琦 (1008-1075) and Fan Zhongyan during the war against Western Xia. The impression he made upon Fan was such that the latter gifted him with a copy of *The Zuo Commentaries of the Spring and Autumn Annals* 左氏春秋 and encouraged him to read more. Much to Fan's delight, Di was able to realise his full potential to become a legendary warrior and military strategist.

In 1043, an interesting turn of event occurred when Liu Hu 刘沪 (?-1047) defeated a band of bandit in the town of Shuiluo 水洛 in present-day Gansu 甘肃. Liu quickly recognised the strategic advantage of this region as a thoroughfare between China Proper and Tangut territories with futile soil and rich deposits of silver. His recommendation to build a fort in this location was approved by Zheng Jian 郑戩 (992-1049), his superior officer, who even sent Dong Shilian 董士廉 (?-?) to assist him in this task. But when Di Qing arrived at the scene as associate commander (effectively replacing Zheng as the most authoritative voice in the region), he strongly opposed the idea of erecting a stronghold in what he considered to be "barbarian territories." When Liu and Dong ignored his command and continued with the construction work, he ordered their immediate arrest.

This incident became known as the Shuiluo Incident and provoked an intense debate among some of the most important ministers of the time. Yu Jing, for example, advocated for the immediate release of Liu and Dong and the demotion of Di Qing. In his petition, he simultaneously highlights the strategic importance of having a base at Shuiluo and goes into great length to admonish Di Qing for his impetuous behavior:

Di Qing is a brute, this is the first reason [he cannot be trusted]. Because soldiers tend to be careless, our court has a long-standing policy to appoint a minister to supervise a soldier, in order to prevent the latter from causing trouble. Di Qing has completely disregarded this policy, this is the second reason. Di Qing rose to his current rank from the lowly position of a foot soldier. He may be good with his fists, but he has never fought in any great war or performed miracle on the battle field. Yet he is empowered by the court without having earned the respect of those around him. His commandship of the army is not supported by anybody of talent, and he has already caused a great deal of trouble despite the assistance he has received from Yin Zhu. As a brash individual whose commandship is unsupported by his subordinates, his failure is predetermined. This is the third reason. (Yu, 1965: 15-6)

Some of Yu's point about Di Qing may have been valid, but his denigration of Di, a war hero with a history of success against Tangut militants, as a brute and a foot soldier was unnecessary and filled with prejudice typical of Song literati against military personnel. It also directly contradicts Fan's suggestion to suspend construction and court martial Liu and Dong for disobeying Di's order. Although in the end, neither suggestion was accepted by the Emperor, who instead adopted another recommendation from Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 (1007-1072) to praise both parties for their "contributions", allow construction work to be continued, and promote Di Qing to be in charge of both Huyuan and Wei (so as to remove him from this area), given the equal importance of General Di and the stronghold in the Song's war efforts against Western Xia, this decision is hardly surprising. But in championing for opposite causes, Fan and Yu showed themselves to be far from the political allies for which they are often mistaken.

From our above observation, it is evident that Fan and Yu were neither friend nor clique. Instead, they were simply acquaintances with mutual respect for each other, who occasionally fought for the same cause. Despite this, and somewhat unfortunately on Yu's behalf, not only were the two men connected by public opinion as members of the Four Virtuous Men, but Yu's defense of Fan in 1036 further cemented his reputation as one of Fan's political allies. The term unfortunate is used here because Yu's perceived association with Fan not only diminished his myriad individual achievements (overshadowed by Fan), but also made him a powerful political enemy in Lu which directly contributed to his downfall. To prove this, let us turn our attention to the identity of his two accusers, as we seek to understand the political motivation which underpinned Yu's impeachment.

According to official history, Yu's impeachment was brought about by two accusers who filed a joint-complaint. Their names are also provided as Wang Ping 王平 and Liu Yuanyu 刘元瑜, who respectively held the position of Palace Censor and Investigating Censor. Both figures are relatively obscure in Song history, but in *A Classified Collection of Events and Facts of the Song Dynasty* 宋朝事实类苑, there is a story of a man named Wang Ping who was Palace Censor at around the same period when the aforementioned Wang was active. They are likely the one and the same person. According to this story, when Wang was first promoted to the position of Palace Censor, he

was troubled by the regulation which stated that all Palace Censors must file a report of misconduct within the first one hundred days of officialdom. As the deadline approached, speculation ran wild as to who would be the target of Wang's first accusation. They were all shocked when the content of Wang's report was unveiled, in which he accuses the Imperial kitchen of wrongdoing because a hair was found in the Emperor's meal.<sup>5</sup>

The above presentation of Wang is obviously highly unflattering. But aside from Lu's history of promoting incompetent officials, there is no hard evidence that points to a relationship between Wang and Lu. The same, however, cannot be said of Liu Yuanyu who was a well-known ally of Lu Yijian with a history of launching political schemes against Lu's enemies. Their best-known coup occurred in 1044 when Du Yan 杜衍 (978-1057) was first appointed Prime Minister (while simultaneously serving as Grand Secretary 大学士 and Minister of Defense 枢密使). Du notably resisted the tradition of Internal Recommendation 内降 and refused to appoint a number of officials recommended by the Emperor. His decision earned him high praises among moralists and historians, but also made him an enemy of Lu Yijian who made many of these recommendations himself. According to a story first recorded in *Records of the Eastern Study* 东轩笔录, in order to remove Du from office, Lu ordered Liu Yuanyu to look for an excuse to accuse Du of misconduct. He finally found an opportunity to do so when Su Shunqin 蘇舜欽 (1008-1048), who was Du's son-in-law, sold some waste paper from the court to raise money for a literary gathering. Liu immediately accused Su of corruption and successfully got Su impeached. Su's banishment created a ripple effect and resulted in the demotion of Du Yan 杜衍 (978-1057), as well as the impeachment of a number of writers and poets who attended the event. In his report of the incident to Lu Yijian, Liu allegedly coined the idiom "catching everything in the net" 一网打尽 to boast his success (Wei, 1983: 4.41).

Although Lu passed away in 1044, the influence of his clique persisted in Zhang Shixun 张士逊 (964-1049), whom he recommended, as well as his son Lu Gongzhu 吕公着 (1018-1089). Their relationship with

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<sup>5</sup> This being said, Wang may not have been entirely devoid of talent or integrity. In another story recorded in the *Random records from Willing Change Studio*, when Wang first began his career as a junior officer in Xu Zhou 许州, a woman was murdered in the field and her donkey ran away. It was found and adopted by a family who was later accused of murdering the woman. The family pled not guilty, and against the wish of his superior to pass a quick verdict, Wang took it upon himself to reinvestigate the circumstances surrounding the murder. In the end, he was able to find the real culprit, clear the name of the innocent family, and impress his superior. For more information, see Wu, 1979: 12.369 and Jiang, 1981: 70.939.

Fan Zhongyan remained contentious and there were frequent accusations from members of one group toward the other. Their ongoing conflict partly contributed to the exile of Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi 富弼 (1004-1083) in the beginning of 1045, right in the middle of Fan's education reform. Under the circumstances, it was simply a logical decision for Liu and others to continue to target Yu in their effort to consolidate political power. It also explains the significant time gap between his last voyage and the time of his accusation (roughly half a year), because as it turns out, his impeachment has less to do with being treasonous than it was a coup for political gain.

For years, the impeachment of Yu Jing has been cited by academics as evidence for the xenophobic shortcomings of the Song court. But by removing from the equation our inclination to interpret the event at its face value, this paper has been able to paint a much more complicated picture involving politics, clique, along with xenophobia. In doing so, it not only shows the limitation of our conventional understanding of the event, but also highlights the intricacies of Song politics in which there was often no right decision.

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