

THE SUIGONG XU 遂公盨 CALLIGRAPHY AND INSCRIPTION: A CONTEXTUAL RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSLATION

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Translated by Chen Shu

The Suigong *xu* 遂公盨 is a purchased, rather than archaeologically excavated bronze vessel published in 2002.¹ The artifact itself measures 11.8 cm in height and 24.8 cm in diameter at its opening, and its original lid is missing (Figure 1). The Suigong *xu* inscription is cast into the inside bottom of the vessel (Figure 2), which is dated to the second half of the middle Western Zhou period (1046–771 B.C.E.).² Currently it resides in

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1. The Suigong *xu* was published in 2002 in both a museum catalog edited by the Poly Art Museum 保利藝術博物館, *X Gong Xu: Da Yu Zhishui yu Wei Zheng yi de* 夔公盨——大禹治水與為政以德 (Beijing: Xianzhuang, 2002), and in *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物 2002.6, both of which included the following four articles: Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Lun Suigong xu jiqi zhongyao yiyi” 論夔公盨及其重要意義, reprinted in Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu* 中國古代文明研究 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue, 2005), 126–36; Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “Bingong xu mingwen kaoshi” 夔公盨銘文考釋, reprinted in Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang* 中國出土古文獻十講 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue, 2004), 46–77; Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚, “X-gong xu mingwen chushi” 夔公盨銘文初釋, *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 2002.6, 28–34; and Li Ling 李零, “Lun X-gong xu faxian de yiyi” 論夔公盨發現的意義, *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 2002.6, 35–45.

2. Li Xueqin, “Lun Suigong xu,” 126. This date is somehow controversial. In her presentation “Bin (Sui)-Gong Xu: a Unique Western Zhou Document, a Modern Forgery, or an Early Chinese Antiquarian Imitation” (Paris: Chinese Manuscripts Workshop 4, July 4, 2012), Maria Khayutina argues, although without convincing evidence, that the X Gong *xu* should be dated to the early Spring and Autumn 春秋 (770–477 B.C.E.) period.

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Figure 1: Suigong xu. After *Journal of National Museum of Chinese History* 2002.6, Plate 1 (bottom).

the Poly Art Museum (*Baoli Yishu Bowuguan* 保利藝術博物館) in Beijing, which acquired it from the Hong Kong antique market in early 2002.

The Suigong xu received immediate attention in the field of early China as soon as it was published. Journals such as *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物, *Huaxue* 華學, and *International Research on Bamboo and Silk Documents: Newsletter* 國際簡帛研究通訊 published several series of articles focusing on the artifact.³ Sarah Allan and Constance A. Cook organized

3. In addition to the four articles published in *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* listed in note 2, the articles published in *Huaxue* 華學 6 (2003) include Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤, "Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian Yu zhi zong de" 夔公盨與夏書佚篇《禹之總德》, 1-6; Zhou Fengwu 周鳳五, "Suigong xu ming chutan" 遂公盨銘初探, 7-14; Luo Kun 羅琨, "Bingong xu ming yu Da Yu zhishui de wenxian jizai" 夔公盨銘與大禹治水的文獻記載, 15-25; Shen Jianhua 沈建華, "Du X-gong xu mingwen xiaozha" 讀夔公盨銘文小札, 26-30; Zhang Yongshan 張永山, "Bingong xu ming 'duo shan jun chuan'" 夔公盨銘 "陸山觀川" 考, 31-34; Jiang Linchang 江林昌, "Suigong xu mingwen de xueshu jiazhi zonglun" 夔公盨銘文的學術價值綜論, 35-49. The articles published in *International Research on Bamboo and Silk Documents: Newsletter* 3.2-6 (2003), i.e., *The X Gong Xu* 夔公盨: A Report and Papers from the Dartmouth Workshop, ed. Xing Wen 邢文, include Liu Yu 劉雨, "Bingong kao" 鬲公考, 6-16; Sarah Allan, "Some preliminary comments on the 夔公盨," 16-23; Constance A. Cook, "Bin Gong xu and Sage-king Yu: Translation and Commentary," 23-28; Horst Huber, "Some literary remarks occasioned by four readings of the X gong xu 夔公盨 inscription," 29-33; Louisa G. Fitzgerald-Huber, "The X gong xu 夔公盨: Brief notes on the question of authenticity, with an excursus into the derivation of the xu vessel type," 34-44; Cheng Ifan 程一凡, "A Royal Food Container and Its Discontents," 44-49; Shao Wangping 邵望平, "Xinhuo Xi Zhou tongxu xuming san ti" 新獲西周銅盨銘三題, 49-52; Xing Wen, "Suigong xu ming de fenduan yu 'Jue wei wei De'" 夔公盨銘的分段與"厥豐唯德," 53-55. In addition, Chen Shu's "Collected Interpretations of the X Gong Xu," published in the same volume, includes a rubbing and scans of the original Chu-script graphs, as well as references to other scholars' interpretations.

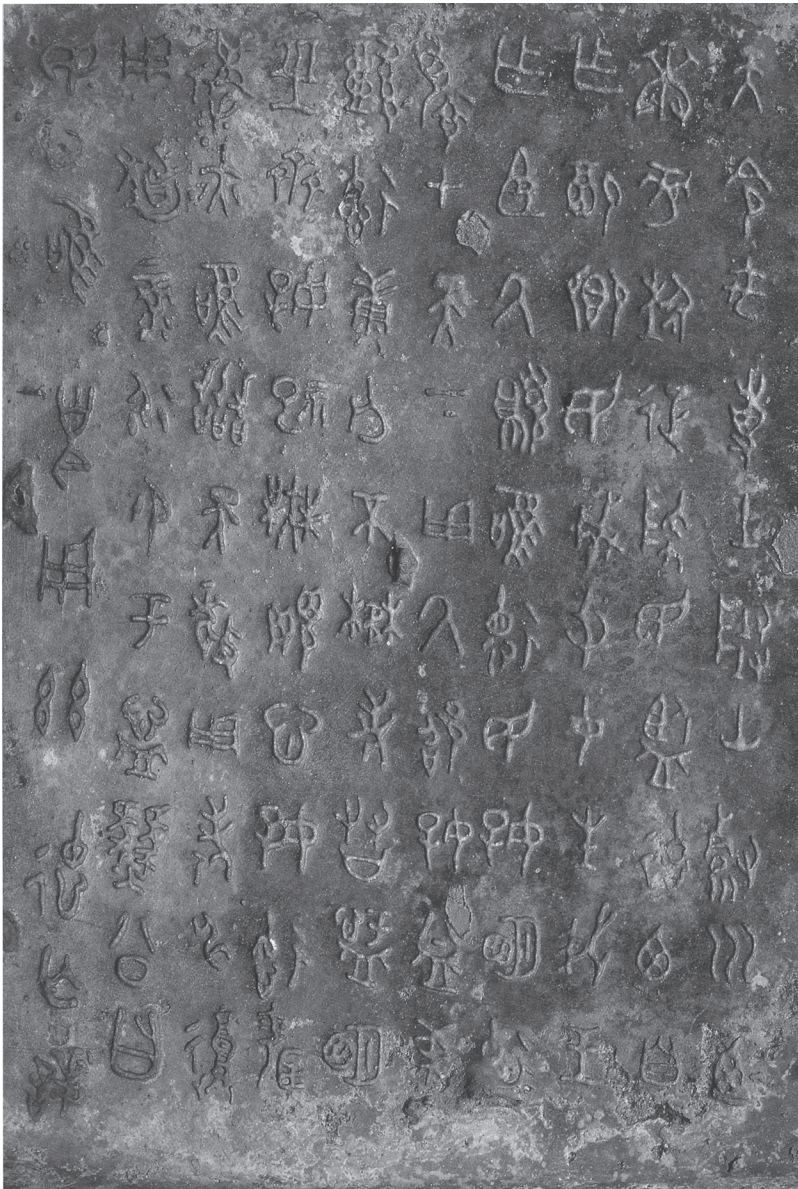


Figure 2: Bottom of the Suigong xu.
After *Journal of National Museum of Chinese History* 2002.6, Cover 2.

the first international workshop on the bronze vessel on March 1, 2003 at Dartmouth College.⁴ They also produced the first English translations of the bronze inscription.⁵ The reasons for such unusual attention to the Suigong *xu* inscription include several aspects. First of all, it provides new textual support for the theory of the existence of the Xia 夏 Dynasty (2070–1600 B.C.E.) and Xia Yu 夏禹. The *yigu* 疑古 (Doubting Antiquity) ideological trend of the 20s and 30s of the last century, which continues to cast its influence today, questions and even denies the historic existence of the Xia and Xia Yu. Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, who believed that the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, *Mozi* 墨子 and *Mencius* 孟子, etc. are dated after middle and late Warring States period, argued that the connection between the Xia and Yu was not documented in the texts that are dated before the middle Warring States period (476–221 B.C.E.).⁶ The Suigong *xu* is the first and only extant bronze vessel of the Western Zhou Dynasty discovered so far that makes reference to Yu in its inscription. No other Western Zhou antiquity with such a reference has been unearthed. It singularly brings an ancient voice to light, serving as fresh evidence that the Xia Dynasty and Xia Yu did indeed exist in the belief of the Western Zhou people. Secondly, its style of writing and sentence structures are distinctly different from those of other bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou period. It presents the only writing sample of this particular genre, which is similar to that of the *Shang shu* 尚書 in the Western Zhou period. Thirdly, it seems to contain the earliest reference to the *Shang shu* found so far because both the Suigong *xu* and the *Shang shu* share certain words and phrases in their texts.

Since the bronze vessel was purchased on the antique market, it is necessary to first consider whether it is genuine. After a number of rigorous examinations, all the leading experts on bronze vessels and in Chinese paleography have come to the consensus that the Suigong *xu* is in fact genuine and its inscription, original. Since its authentication, scholars in the field around the world have published many articles on the Suigong *xu*. The most representative studies, transcriptions, and/or translations include those by professors Li Xueqin 李學勤 (2002), Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 (2002), Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤 (2003), Zhou Fengwu 周鳳五 (2003), Sarah Allan (2003), Constance A. Cook (2003), and Edward L. Shaughnessy (2007).⁷ It has been ten years since the first attempt at the reconstruction

4. Sarah Allan, "Background to the Workshop on the 夔公盃," *International Research on Bamboo and Silk Documents: Newsletter* 3.2–6 (2003), 3–5.

5. Allan, "Some preliminary comments," 16–23; Cook, "Bin Gong xu and Sage-king Yu," 23–28.

6. Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, *Gu Jiegang gushi lunwen ji* (juan yi) 顧頡剛古史論文集 (卷一) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2011), 227.

7. Edward L. Shaughnessy, "The Bin Gong Xu Inscription and the Origins of

and interpretation of the inscribed bronze text, however, questions and problems abound. A recent revisit to the Poly Art Museum immediately before this article was finalized has made it necessary to reexamine the authenticity issue of the Suigong *xu*. This article will first reexamine the calligraphy of the Suigong *xu* inscription in order to provide a new perspective on the authenticity or the dating of the Suigong *xu*; secondly it will discuss some of the major issues that arise in the reconstruction and interpretation of the Suigong *xu* inscription; then it will provide a Contextual Reconstruction of the Suigong *xu* inscription, and finally provide an English translation accordingly.⁸

A Reexamination of the Suigong *xu* Calligraphy

I first discussed the calligraphy of the Suigong *xu* inscription nearly a decade ago at the March 2003 Dartmouth workshop before I had an opportunity to physically observe the Suigong *xu* in China.⁹ Although I included Cheng Ifan's 程一凡 article, which challenged the authenticity of the Suigong *xu* from various perspectives including calligraphy, in the workshop volume that I edited,¹⁰ I did not conduct any further research on the Suigong *xu* calligraphy directly myself. The present study of the Suigong *xu* heightens the need to reexamine the Suigong *xu* calligraphy. Such a reexamination will be an effective method of determining the authenticity and the dating of the Suigong *xu* in the current situation, in which the vessel is kept inside a glass displaying case and is not available for direct handling or scientific testing.

Most scholars accept that the Suigong *xu* is dated to the second half of the middle Western Zhou, generally equivalent to the reign of King of

the Chinese Literary Tradition," in *Books in Numbers: Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Harvard-Yenching Library, Conference Papers*, ed. Wilt Idema (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007), 3–21. In 2005, a Russian translation of the bronze inscription was also published. Maria Khayutina, "Bin (Sui)-gong xu i konstruirovaniye proshlogo v kitaiskoi traditsii" (Bin [Sui]-gong xu and the construction of the past in Chinese tradition), in *Materialy kitavevedcheskoj konferencii ISAA pri MGU (Mai 2004 g.)* (Proceedings of the Sinological Conference of the Institute of Asian and African Countries of the M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University [May 2004]) (Moscow: ISAA, 2005), 59–70.

8. Contextual Reconstruction includes two steps. The first step focuses on the analysis of each individual character. The second step focuses on reconstructing a text as a whole; Xing Wen, "Zouxiang Zhongguo guwenshuxue: Shizi de toumingxing yu fuyuan de guanlianxing" 走向中國古文書學: 釋字的透明性與復原的關聯性 (plenary session presentation for the Conference on "Chinese Manuscriptology," "中國古文書學" 研討會, sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China, June 2012).

9. Xing Wen, "Suigong Xu: Typology, Calligraphy, and a Transparent Transcription" (paper presented at the X Gong Xu workshop at Dartmouth College, March 1, 2003).

10. Cheng Ifan, "A Royal Food Container and Its Discontents," in Xing, *The X Gong Xu 鬲公盃*, 44–49.

Gong 恭王 or 共王 (922–900 B.C.E.). Based on extensive study of archaeological typology, most archaeologists agree that Western Zhou bronzes are divided into three periods and that bronzes dated to the reign of King Gong belong to the middle period. As specified by Wang Shimin 王世民, Chen Gongrou 陳公柔 and Zhang Changshou 張長壽, the middle period includes the Zhou Kings Mu 穆 (r. 976–922 B.C.E.), Gong, Yi 懿 (r. 899–892 B.C.E.), Xiao 孝 (r. 891–886 B.C.E.), and Yi 夷 (r. 885–878 B.C.E.).¹¹ As a result of the study of archaeological typology, this periodization applies to the shape, decoration and calligraphy of the Western Zhou bronzes.

An examination of the calligraphy demonstrates that the calligraphic style of the Suigong *xu* inscription does not correspond to the style found



Figure 3: Section of Dafeng *gui* 大豐簋 inscription. From *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 8, 195, no. 4261.

on middle Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, but to that of the late Western Zhou. The style of the early Western Zhou bronze inscriptions exhibits certain traces of the style of the late Shang period (1300–1046 B.C.E.). In the early Western Zhou style, characters could come in different sizes with irregular spaces between them; in other words, characters form neat vertical columns but not horizontal lines (Figure 3). Many strokes are irregular in thickness, with wide strokes (*feibi* 肥筆, fat strokes), pointed ending tips, and wavy downward strokes slanting toward the right (Figures 4 and 5). Unlike in the early Western Zhou period, the calligraphy

style of the middle Western Zhou has characters of mostly rectangular shapes arranged neatly with regular spaces in between, and strokes in similar thickness with smooth stroke turns, done mostly in “round strokes” — “round strokes” are done by turning the writing brush around, hiding the tip of the brush within the strokes; as a result, there are no squared stroke turns. The Shi Qiang *pan* 史牆盤 of the period of King Gong (Figure 6) is an example of this style. The style of the late Western

11. The early period includes Zhou Kings Wu 武 (1046–1043 B.C.E.), Cheng 成 (1042–1021 B.C.E.), Kang 康 (1020–996 B.C.E.), and Zhao 昭 (995–977 B.C.E.), and the late period includes Zhou Kings Li 厲 (877–841 B.C.E.), Xuan 宣 (827–782 B.C.E.), and You 幽 (781–771 B.C.E.). Wang Shimin 王世民, Chen Gongrou 陳公柔 and Zhang Changshou 張長壽, eds., *Xi Zhou qingtongqi fenqi duandai yanjiu* 西周青銅器分期斷代研究 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1999), 4.



Figure 4: Section of Li *gui* 利簋 inscription. From *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 8, 13, no. 4131.



Figure 5: Section of Zuobo *gui* 柞伯簋 inscription. From Wang Longzheng, Jiang Tao, and Yuan Junjie, "Xin faxian de Zuobo *gui* jiqi mingwen kaoshi," *Wenwu* 1998.9, 56, fig. 3



Figure 6: Section of Shi Qiang *pan* 史牆盤 inscription. From *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 16, 181, no. 10175.

Zhou bronze inscriptions evolves into two styles—one is a further development of the middle Western Zhou style, as seen in the Maogong *ding* 毛公鼎, and the other is a novel development of the middle Western Zhou style in a different direction, as seen in the Sanshi *pan* 散氏盤. The Maogong *ding* represents a more sophisticated style of Western Zhou bronze calligraphy in which the strokes are solid and firm, the structures of the characters are precise and balanced, and the overall layout of the calligraphic work is methodic and mature (Figure 7).

The Sanshi *pan* marks the Western Zhou bronze calligraphy in a new style in which the characters tend to be squat-shaped, the strokes are round and adhesive, and the structures of the characters are slanted

and lively (Figure 8). The inscriptions on both the Maogong *ding* and the Sanshi *pan* are well accepted as critical masterpieces in the history of Chinese calligraphy.

As seen in the representative bronze inscriptions illustrated in figures 3 to 7, in the inscriptions of early, middle and late Western Zhou, the characters are generally rectangular in shape. Such a rectangular look of the characters persists until the Sanshi *pan* of the late Western Zhou. As illustrated in Figure 8, in the inscription on the Sanshi *pan*, the shape of the characters has morphed from the rectangular shape of the early and the middle Western Zhou period to a squat shape, which parallels

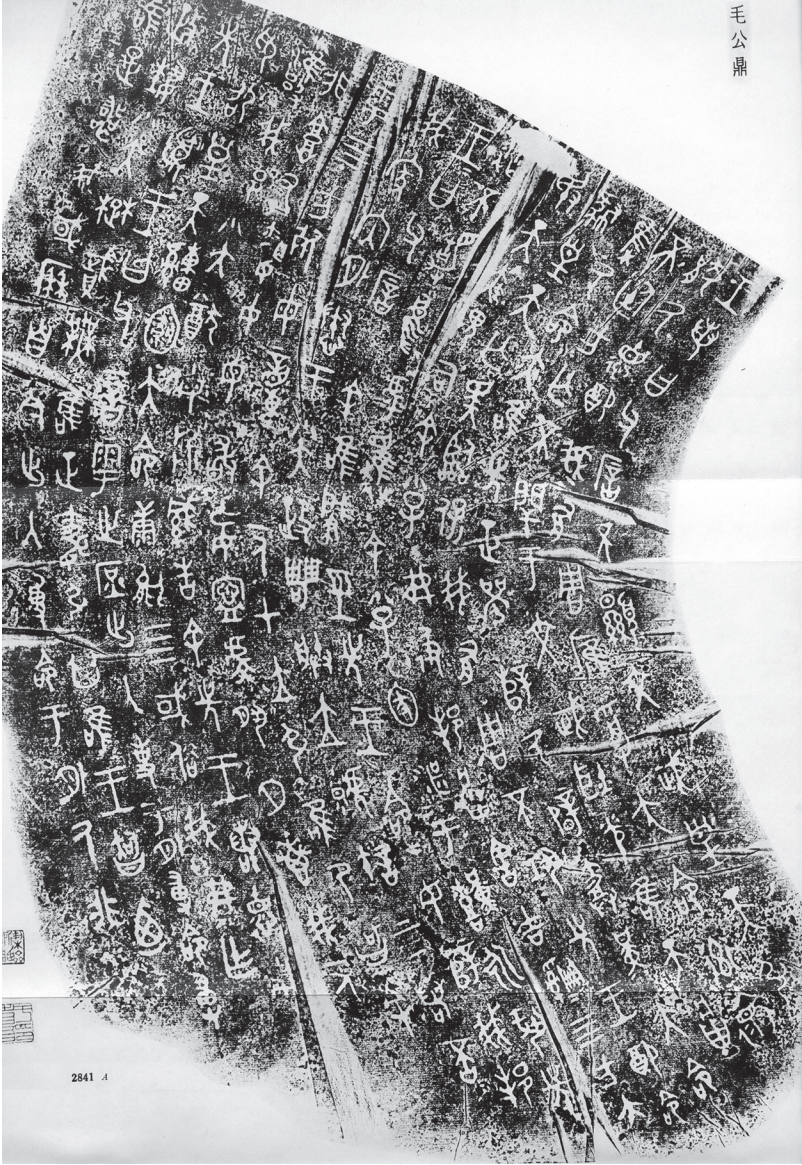


Figure 7: Section of Maogong *ding* inscription.
From *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 5, 261, no. 2841.



Figure 8: Section of Sanshi *pan* inscription. From *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 16, 182, no. 10176.

chronologically with the rectangular-shaped characters as seen in Maogong *ding* of the late Western Zhou. However, in the Suigong *xu* inscription, which is dated to the period of King Gong in the middle Western Zhou, the characters are also squat-shaped (Figure 9). This is a phenomenon in discord with all the known bronze inscriptions of the King Gong time period, such as the Shi Qiang *pan* inscription (Figure 6), the inscriptions of the Wei *ding* 衛鼎 series (Figure 10) excavated from Dongjia cun 董家村, Qishan 岐山, Shaanxi province

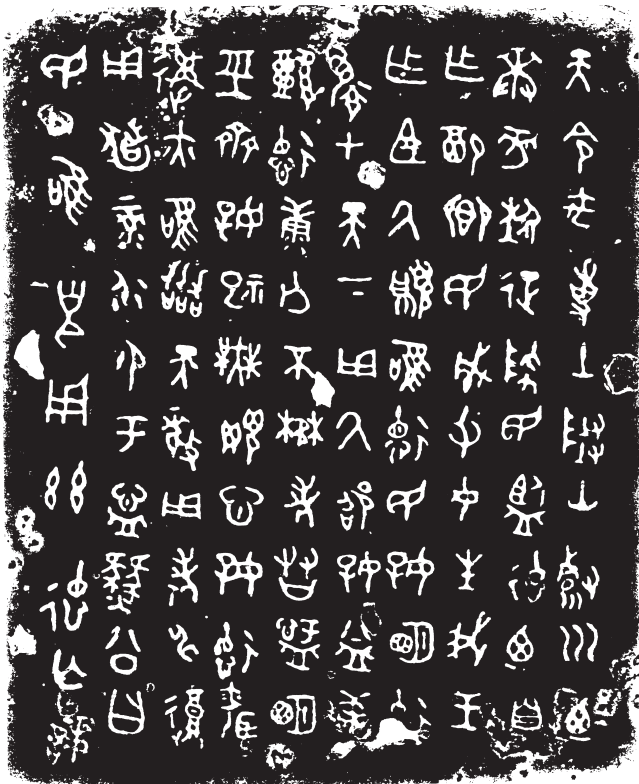


Figure 9: The Suigong *xu* inscription. After Baoli Yishu Bowuguan, ed., *Sui Gong Xu: Da Yu zhishui yu wei zheng yi de*, 13.







Figure 10: Section of *Wei ding* 衛鼎 inscription. From *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 5, 230, no. 2831.



Figure 11: Section of *Hu ding* 魯鼎 inscription. From *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, vol. 5, 244, no. 2838.

in 1975, and the *Hu ding* 魯鼎 inscription (Figure 11). Since the *Suigong xu* vessel is dated to the middle Western Zhou period based on its shape and decoration, etc.,¹² the typological dating of the *Suigong xu* vessel conflicts with the calligraphic style of the *Suigong xu* inscription.

The style of the *Suigong xu* calligraphy is consistent with the typical calligraphic style of the late Western Zhou bronze inscriptions represented by the *Sanshi pan* and the *Maogong ding*. Comparing the shapes of the characters, both the shapes of the *Suigong xu* characters and those of the *Sanshi pan* characters adopt the squat-shaped style. A number of the graphs in the *Suigong xu* inscription remarkably resemble those in the *Maogong ding* of the late Western Zhou period. For example, *tian* 天 in the *Suigong xu* is written as ; it is written as  in the *Maogong ding*. *Nai* 廼 in the *Suigong xu* is written as  and it is written as  in

12. See also Louisa G. Fitzgerald-Huber, "The X gong xu 夔公盨: Brief notes on the question of authenticity, with an excursus into the derivation of the xu vessel type," in Xing, *The X Gong Xu 夔公盨*, 34–44.

the Maogong *ding*. *Jing* 𠄎 is another example. It is written as 𠄎 in the Suigong *xu*, and written as 𠄎 in the Maogong *ding*. Some other graphs are very similar to each other if particular components are removed. For example, *ning* 寧 in the Suigong *xu* is written as 𠄎 which is very similar to 𠄎 in the Maogong *ding*. *Zheng* 征 is written as 𠄎 in the Suigong *xu*, and the right component of *zheng* 正 is written as 𠄎 in the Maogong *ding*. As we know, if the dating conflicts with the typology of a bronze vessel and its inscription, there must be a problem, either of authenticity or of dating. I look forward to the opportunity to conduct a thorough study of the Suigong *xu* on these critical issues.

Major Controversial Issues of the Suigong *xu* Inscription

In the present work, I will basically limit my focus to the transcriptions of the Suigong *xu* inscription by professors Li Xueqin, Qiu Xigui, Jao Tsung-i and Zhou Fengwu, as they represent the most distinctive methodology in reconstructing the Suigong *xu* text. Selected representative scholarship by other scholars is also included.¹³ These versions, however, diverge at numerous places in their reconstructions and interpretations. The major differences include, but are not limited to, the following issues: 1) *suishan junchuan* 隨山濬川 vs. *duoshan* 墮山 and *junchuan* 濬川, 2) *min cheng fumu* 民成父母 vs. *cheng fumu* 成父母, 3) *jue x wei de* 厥德唯德, 4) *haode hungou* 好德婚媾 vs. *haode* 好德 and *hungou* 婚媾, and 5) Suigong 遂公 vs. Bingong 邕公. On the following pages, I will explore each issue separately, explain the disagreements, and offer my reconstructions and interpretations.


Suishan junchuan 隨山濬川 vs. *duoshan* 墮山 and *junchuan* 濬川





The phrase(s) in question is (are) the 6th to 9th characters in the first line of the Suigong *xu* inscription. Professors Li Xueqin and Jao Tsung-i transcribe the phrase as *suishan junchuan* 隨山濬川¹⁴; Professors Qiu Xigui and Zhou Fengwu transcribe it as *duoshan, junchuan* 墮山, 濬川.¹⁵ The disagreement stems from the decipherment of the 6th character 𠄎: Should it be deciphered as *sui* 隨 or as *duo* 墮?

13. Please refer to Chen Shu's "Collected Interpretations of the X Gong Xu" in this volume for a more comprehensive summary of the relevant scholarship on the X Gong *xu*.

14. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 129–30; Jao Tsung-i, "Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian," 4–5.

15. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 48–51; Zhou Fengwu, "Suigong Xu ming ming chutan," 7–8.

If the character  is to be transcribed as *sui* 隨, as suggested by Li and Jao, the difference in the transcriptions can be easily resolved since this transcription matches the phrase *suishan junchuan* 隨山濬川 (“to channel the rivers into the paths formed by the mountain ranges”) that is in the preface to the “Yu gong” 禹貢 of the *Shang shu*.¹⁶ A paleographic discussion follows below after the next paragraph.


Qiu and Zhou, however, approach the character  in a different way. Dissecting the graph into the components of *fu* 阜 (piled earth), *tu* 土 (earth), and *you* 又 (hand), they conclude that  should be transcribed as *duo* 墮 (to make earth fall). According to Qiu and Zhou, the character  appears in the Chu 楚 bamboo slips excavated from Baoshan 包山, Hubei province, and that since it has been deciphered as *sui* 隋 therein, it should be transcribed as *duo* 墮 with the earth (*tu*) component that is present in the graph .

According to Li, on the other hand, on Baoshan bamboo slip 22, which is presumably the slip Qiu refers to, the same character, which has been transcribed as *sui* 隋 by the editors of the *Baoshan Chu jian* 包山楚簡, should in fact be *sui* 隨, rather than *sui* 隋, and the character could easily lead to *duo* 墮 by having the earth component added.¹⁸ Shi Yumei 師玉梅 lists the graphic forms of Li’s examples by adding one more example from a bronze inscription.¹⁹ Evidence that supports Li’s decipherment of *sui* 隨 is readily available in many sources. As Li has pointed out, the variant forms of the graph in the Baoshan Chu bamboo slip inscriptions, such as those on slips 62, 163 and 184, and particularly the one on slip 16 of group A of the Guodian 郭店 *Laozi* 老子, should all be transcribed as *sui* 隨, as supported by the internal textual evidence from the Baoshan bamboo slip texts and by the external textual evidence from the received version of the *Laozi*. The character on Baoshan slip 62 is related to the country name *Sui* 隨; the one on slip 184 is the *sui* of *suicong* 隨從; the one on the Guodian bamboo slip 16 of the group A of the *Laozi* has its equivalent *sui* 隨 of *qian hou xiang sui* 前後相隨 in the received version

16. *Shisanjing zhushu: Shang shu zhengyi* 十三經注疏·尚書正義, ed. Li Xueqin (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1999), 6.132.

17. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 48–51; Zhou Fengwu, “Suigong xu ming chutan,” 7–8.

18. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 129–30. According to Li, the *sui* 隋/隨 graph with an earth component at the bottom is actually *sui* 墮 with the earth component placed to the left of the *su* 隋 rather than to the bottom of it as in *duo* 墮.

19. Shi Yumei 師玉梅, “Shuo ‘sui shan jun chuan’ zhi sui” 說“隨山濬川”之隨, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 古文字研究 25 (2004), 144–47. The bronze inscription evidence that Shi added is *sui* inscribed on the Qi nian Zheng ling ge 七年鄭令戈, which has all the components of  except omitting one of the two hands, *you* 又, see page 145.

of the *Laozi*.²⁰ Therefore, from the component analysis of the form of the character, it is more convincing to transcribe 隄 as *sui* 隨.

From the perspective of contextual interpretation, transcribing 隄 as *sui* 隨 is also more convincing than other transcriptions. Li's transcription of 隄山 as *suishan* 隨山 correlates much more closely with the historical legend of the Great Yu Controlling the Flood than Qiu's transcription as *duoshan* 墮山 (interpreted as meaning *xueping* 削平 "leveling mountains"²¹) and Zhou's transcription of *duoshan* 墮山 as *zaoshan* 鑿山 ("digging through mountains").²² The legend tells the story of Yu's father Gun 鯀 stopping the flood by means of blocking the water, and Yu controlling the flood by means of diverting the water.²³ Perhaps there is not a way more effective at managing floods than diverting and channeling the water into the natural path formed by the undulating mountain ranges. Clearly, Li's transcription ensures that the Suigong *xu* inscription tallies with the transmitted textual accounts of Yu's flood management approach.

Furthermore, transcribing the phrase in question into *suishan junchuan* 隨山濬川 is corroborated by classics in the received textual tradition. For example, the "Shu xu" 書序 of the "Yu gong" chapter of the *Shang shu* uses this phrase verbatim; "Yu gong"'s opening line goes: *Yu fu tu, suishan kanmu* 禹敷土, 隨山刊木 ("Yu charted the earth, and cut trees by the mountain ranges"),²⁴ which contains the phrase *suishan* 隨山; the "Yi Ji" 益稷 chapter of the *Shang shu* also has the line *suishan kanmu* 隨山刊木²⁵ that contains the phrase *suishan* 隨山. Both the excavated paleographical evidence and the transmitted textual evidence support the transcription of 隄山 as *suishan* 隨山. However, this transcription might have led to misleading interpretations of the original meanings of the character and relevant phrases in the original *Shang shu* due to paleographic form confusion when the book was being edited in later times. This issue merits a separate examination.

20. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 129–30.

21. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 51.

22. Zhou Fengwu, "Suigong xu ming chutan," 8.

23. As documented in "Jian'ai" 兼愛 of the Mozi 墨子, "Zhou yu" 周語 of the *Guo yu* 國語, and "Teng wen gong" 滕文公 of the Mencius 孟子, etc. However, Gu Jiegang argues that both Gun and Yu used the swelling soil to "fill" the flood, i.e., *yi xitu tian hongshui* 以息土填洪水. Gu Jiegang, *Gu Jiegang gushi lunwen ji* (juan yi), 516–29. This is the probable source of Mark Lewis's argument that Yu "used mountain heights, and hence the 'swelling' soil, to form ranges that channeled the flood waters into the sea," Mark Edward Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 63.

24. *Shisanjing zhushu: Shang shu zhengyi*, 6.132.

25. *Shisanjing zhushu: Shang shu zhengyi*, 5.112.

Min cheng fumu 民成父母 vs. *cheng fumu* 成父母

The phrase in question appears in the third line in the Suigong *xu* inscription, which comprises ten characters. These ten characters have inspired several different versions of interpretation. The four representative ones are:

- A. Li's transcription: . . . *zuo pei xiang min, cheng fumu. Sheng wo wang* 作配享民, 成父母. 生我王 . . . ("[Yu] became the King, and became the parent of the people. Heaven gave birth to our King . . .");²⁶
- B. Qiu's transcription: . . . *zuo pei, xiang min; cheng fumu, sheng wo wang* 作配, 嚮民; 成父母, 生我王 . . . (" . . . [Heaven] made [Yu] the King guide the people; [Heaven] made [the King] become the parent of the people by giving birth to our King");²⁷
- C. Jao's transcription: . . . *zuo pei xiang. Min cheng fumu. (Tian) sheng wo wang* 作配饗. 民成父母. (天) 生我王 . . . (" . . . made [Yu himself] the sacrifice [to Heaven].²⁸ The people considered [Yu as their] parent. [Heaven] gave birth to our King . . .");²⁹
- D. Zhou's transcription: . . . *zuo pei, xiang min, cheng fumu, sheng. Wo wang* 作配、嚮民、成父母、生. 我王 . . . (" . . . became the incarnation [of Heaven, guided the people, and [the people] were able to be parents [to raise children], and to make a living. Our King . . .").³⁰

To facilitate our discussion here, I have divided these different versions of transcriptions into two categories—one represented by Jao that uses *min cheng fumu* 民成父母, and another represented by Li, Qiu and Zhou that uses *cheng fumu* 成父母.

It is necessary to clarify that Jao's transcription of *min cheng fumu* 民成父母 is not meant to be read as *renmin chengwei fumu* 人民成為父母 ("the people became the parents"), or *wei ren fumu* 為人父母 ("became the parents of someone"), as the words may appear to mean. Instead, Jao's transcription of *min cheng fumu* 民成父母 is meant to be *wei min (shi zhi) zuowei fumu* 謂民 (視之) 作為父母 meaning "the people (regarded Xia Yu) as a parent."³¹

With regard to the question of whether *cheng fumu* 成父母 or *min cheng fumu* 民成父母 is a more appropriate transcription, I believe that

26. Based on Li's transcription and interpretation, Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 127 and 133.

27. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 57–59.

28. Jao did not clearly explain this sentence, and the translation is based on Jao's interpretation of the whole text. See Jao Tsung-i, "Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian," 4–5.

29. Jao Tsung-i, "Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian," 4–6.

30. Zhou Fengwu, "Suigong xu ming chutan," 7 and 9.

31. Jao Tsung-i, "Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian," 4–5.

less is better in this case—in other words, adding words to make the transcription work sacrifices the faithfulness of the interpretation. In terms of translation, we should also avoid adding words to make the translation comprehensible unless additional words are required by the English language syntax, as in the case of translating the . . . *zhe* 者 . . . *ye* 也 or *jue* 厥 . . . *wei* 唯 . . . sentence structures in classical Chinese. As explained earlier, Jao's inscription of *min cheng fumu* 民成父母 is meant to be *wei min (shi zhi) zuowei fumu* 謂民(視之)作為父母, which requires that the two words *shi zhi* 視之 (“considered him”) be added to the syntax for the phrase to make sense. If reading *cheng fumu* 成父母 without any added words renders a plausible interpretation of the text, I believe that this reading should be considered valid, and more so than the one that requires adding two words of our own. Therefore, I am in favor of the transcription of *cheng fumu* 成父母, which translates into “become or make the parents,” i.e., “to make the parents play their parental role,” or “to make them become the parents.”

Jue x wei de 厥惟唯德

The phrase in question is *jue x wei de* 厥惟唯德 which appears in the 4th line of the Suigong *xu* inscription. Transcriptions for this phrase vary considerably. The following are four representative ones.

- A. Li's reading includes the character *min* 民 (people) which comes immediately after *de* 德 (virtue); therefore it goes *jue gui wei de min* 厥貴唯德民 (“being virtuous to the people is valued” [i.e., *yi you de yu min wei gui* 以有德于民為貴]);³²
- B. Qiu initially read it as *jue mei wei de* 厥美唯德 (“that which is praised is the virtue”)³³ but subsequently changed to *jue gui wei de* 厥貴唯德 (“that which is valued is the virtue”); his reading does not include the character *min* 民 (people) in this phrase;³⁴
- C. Jao's reading is *jue mei wei de* 厥沫唯德³⁵, which means *yi de wei mei* 以“德”為沫, which in turn means, *shishi yi de ximian* 時時以德洗面 (“frequently wash your face with virtue”);³⁶
- D. Zhou's reading is *jue wu wei de* 厥務唯德, which means *yi xiude wei*

32. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 127.

33. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 59.

34. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 71.

35. *Jue mei wei de* 厥沫唯德 was published as *jue mo wei de* 厥沫唯德, see Jao Tsung-i, “Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian,” 5. I believe the *mo* 沫 here is a typo of *mei* 沫 according to Jao's context. Thus I directly change *mo* into *mei* here and hereafter. See Jao Tsung-i, “Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian,” 5.

36. Jao Tsung-i, “Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian,” 5. See also Poly Art Museum, X Gong Xu: *Da Yu Zhishui yu Wei Zheng yi de*, 60.

xian wu 以修德為先務, which in turn means “cultivation of one’s virtue is the most important thing to do.”³⁷

In addition, some scholars read it as *jue mei wei de* 厥味唯德, which translates into “virtue is that which is the most obscure,” and so on.³⁸ I will not list all different transcriptions here.

Apparently the differences in transcribing this phrase stem from the problems in deciphering the character 𣪠.

𣪠 is not a new character. Li points out that the variant forms of this character, which include *hui* 類 (“wash”), were seen in the *Yu pian* 玉篇.³⁹ Qiu also points out that this character is in its simplified form; its original, complete form has a *shui* 水 (water) component or *min* 皿 (a vessel for eating or washing) component on the bottom, as seen in the inscriptions of the *Lubo pan* 魯伯盤 and the *Lubo yi* 匱, etc.⁴⁰ Upon examining Li’s and Qiu’s analyses, I have come to see that 𣪠 is indeed the top portion of the character 𣪠 as seen in the *Lubo pan* 魯伯盤 inscription,⁴¹ as well as the top portion of the character 𣪠 in the *Lubo yi* 魯伯匱.⁴² We see that the same character appears as 𣪠 in the *Qihou pan* 齊侯盤 and as 𣪠 in the 齊侯敦.⁴³ Both characters have the components of two hands 𠂇 holding water in a basin 𠂇 to cover the head 𠂇. In these cases, the water component in the graph either consists of three dots or two dots, or it is completely left out, thus the graph becomes 𣪠 as in *Qiang pan* 牆盤.⁴⁴ Although these graphs made up of similar components could represent different characters or words in different contexts, similar or same components do represent the same original semantic meanings of

37. Zhou Fengwu, “Suigong xu ming chutan,” 7 and 9.

38. Poly Art Museum, *X Gong Xu: Da Yu Zhishui yu Wei Zheng yi de*, 71.

39. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 127. *Yu pian* has been listed with *Er ya* 爾雅 and *Shuo wen* 說文 as the top three dictionaries for interpreting archaic Chinese characters. As the compiler Gu Yewang 顧野王 (519–581) states, it is to solve the problem of “*liushu bati, jin gu shu xing, huo zige er xun tong, huo wenjun er shi yi*” 六書八體, 今古殊形, 或字各而訓同, 或文均而釋異 (“The Six Writings and Eight Scripts all have variants in the present and ancient forms: either the graphs are different but the interpretations are the same, or the writings are equal in the forms but the interpretations are different”), thus an important source for interpreting variants of Western Zhou graphs.


40. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 59.



41. Rong Geng 容庚, ed., *Jinwen bian* 金文編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 627.

42. Rong, ed., *Jinwen bian*, 627.

43. Rong, ed., *Jinwen bian*, 241. See also Xing Wen, “Shiwen yu shijing: Suigong xu yu xin jiangxue” 釋文與釋經: 甗公盥與新經學, in *Xinshiji de guwenzixue yu jingdian quanshi: Di si jie guoji Zhongguo guwenzixue yantaohui lunwen ji* 新世紀的古文字學與經典詮釋: 第四屆國際中國古文字學研討會論文集, ed. Alex Kwong-yue Cheung (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2003), 117–26.

44. Rong, ed., *Jinwen bian*, 239.

the components.⁴⁵ Therefore, it is possible for those semantically related graphic variants to represent the same word if the contexts define it. The graphic form of  can be transcribed as “𡗗” or “𡗘”. The phrase *Mumu weiwei* 穆穆𡗗𡗗 (“respectfully and untiringly”) is seen in the Caihou pan 蔡侯盤. Yu Xingwu 于省吾 argues that the phrase *Mumu weiwei* 穆穆𡗗𡗗 is in fact *Mumu weiwei* 穆穆𡗗𡗗, the *weiwei* of which is seen in *Weiwei Wenwang*, *lingwen buyi* 𡗗𡗗文王, 令聞不已 (“As for the untiring King Wen, the praises of his fine reputation have never ceased”) in the “Wenwang” 文王 of the “Daya” 大雅.⁴⁶ In this case, the graph *wei* 𡗗 can be considered an erroneous form morphed from the graph *wei* 𡗗. Similarly, the graph *wei* 𡗗 in the phrase *haowei* 浩𡗗 in the Zhao Kuan bei 趙寬碑 inscription of the Eastern Han 東漢 was written as *wei* 𡗗 that is a simplified variant form of *wei* 𡗗, the middle top component 高 of which was replaced by the component 爻.⁴⁷

Thus it can be seen that from the component analysis of the graph ⁴⁸, this character can be transcribed as *wei* 𡗗. I further argue that the phrase in the Suigong *xu* be read as *jue wei wei de* 厥𡗗唯德, that is, “(Yu’s) untiring achievements are due to (his) virtue.” From the point of view of contextual analysis, transcribing  as *wei* 𡗗 is equally convincing. From the beginning of the Suigong *xu* inscription up to the phrase *jue wei wei de* 厥𡗗唯德, the text chronicles Yu’s untiring achievements after he is ordained by Heaven. Virtue is the reason why Yu works so tirelessly. At this point in the text, the inscription summarizes Yu’s “untiring” achievements in the sentence *jue wei wei de* 厥𡗗唯德. This sentence is echoed by the sentence (*jue*) *hungou yi wei xie tian* (厥) 婚媾亦唯協天 (“[their] marriage unions are also (their act) in accordance with [the Way of] Heaven”) in the 7th and 8th lines of the Suigong *xu* inscription. More explanations will follow.

Hao de 好德 and *hungou* 昏媾

The phrases in question here are those with *hao de* 好德 and *hungou* 昏媾, which are found in the 7th and 8th lines in the inscription. Scholars

45. Jiang Weisong 蔣維崧 provides another example of the character in bronze inscriptions with the head component upside down. See Jiang Weisong, “You libian wenti tandao hanzhi yanjiu de tujing he fangfa” 由隸變問題談到漢字研究的途徑和方法, *Shandong daxue xuebao* (*Yuyan wenxue ban*) 山東大學學報 (語言文學版) 1963.3, 1–20.

46. *Shisanjing zhushu: Mao Shi zhengyi* 十三經注疏·毛詩正義, ed. Li Xueqin (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1999), 16–1.958.

47. Shen Nianrun 沈年潤, “Shi Dong Han Sanlao Zhao yuan bei” 釋東漢三老趙掾碑, *Wenwu* 1964.5, 26–29, 31.

48. The origin of the left component is not clear yet. Just like the right component, the left component is also a semantic component. The whole graph is considered a phonetic component as well.

offer widely diverging versions of transcription. Li phrases it as *xin hao de, hungou yi wei xie* 心好德，婚媾亦唯協 (“love virtue from heart, and the marriages are also in harmony”), assigning the character *tian* 天 (Heaven) after *xie* 協 (harmony) to be the first word of the next sentence.⁴⁹ Qiu initially phrased it as *hao de hungou, yi wei xie tian* 好德婚媾，亦唯協天， where *hao de hungou* 好德婚媾 means “practice virtue in marital affairs.” This may imply “placing the love of Virtue over the love of sex” (對於婚媾之事也堅持好德，似有好德不好色之意).⁵⁰ Qiu subsequently acknowledged that his initial transcription is problematic grammatically, and agreed that Li’s version is more logical.⁵¹ Jao’s version works best from the literary point of view. It reads *zong hao de hungou, yi wei xie tianxi* 總好德昏媾，亦唯協天釐， which means “being able to unite friends and relatives who love Virtue, thus enjoying the blessings and wealth bestowed by Heaven” (惟能結合好德的親朋，故可協天賜之福祿).⁵² I find that Jao’s reading of *hun* 昏 (“relatives”) is the only interpretation that does not interpret *hun* 昏 as *hun* 婚 (“marriage”). Although Jao did not provide the reasons for his reading, his interpretation is plausible because *hun* 昏 can stand for relatives in ancient China. The “Shi qin” 釋親 of the *Er ya* 爾雅 has these lines: *fu zhi fu wei hun* 婦之父為婚 (wife’s father is called *hun*) and *fu zhi fumu, xu zhi fumu xiang wei wei hunyin* 婦之父母，壻之父母相謂為婚姻 (“the wife’s parents and the husband’s parents referred to each other as *hun* and *yin*”).⁵³ Zhou’s version applies a full stop after *hungou* 婚媾 to assign these two characters to be the finishing phrase of the previous sentence. Hence his version goes . . . *hao de hungou. Yi wei xie tianxi* 好德婚媾。亦唯協天釐 . . . , i.e., “. . . the people with Virtue get married (into the Zhou royal family) generation after generation. They share the same blessing from Heaven.” According to Zhou, *gou* 媾 means multiple marriages; *hungou* 婚媾 is used as a verb meaning multiple marriages into the Zhou royal family through the generations, which was considered to be a great honor.⁵⁴

Among the major versions of the transcription mentioned here, those of Li and Jao stand out as more logical and plausible. This is because in both versions, *hungou* 婚媾 is used as a noun and serves as the subject of the verb *xie* 協 that follows. This partially explains why Qiu considered Li’s transcription more logical. In Zhou’s version, *hungou* 婚媾 is used as

49. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 128.

50. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 64–65.

51. Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 64–65.

52. Jao Tsung-i, “Bingong xu yu Xia shu yipian,” 5–6.

53. *Shisanjing zhushu: Er ya zhushu* 十三經注疏·爾雅注疏, ed. Li Xueqin (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1999), 4.122.

54. Zhou Fengwu, “Suigong xu ming chutan,” 7, 10.

a verb, which is a grammatically acceptable usage; however such reading of *hungou* leaves the character *xie* 協 in the next sentence without a subject that can be easily identified.

I would argue that an auxiliary word *jue* 厥 in front of the phrase *hungou yi wei xie tian* 婚媾亦唯協天 has been omitted in the original writing. The complete sentence should read (*jue*) *hungou yi wei xie tian* (厥) 婚媾亦唯協天. Thus its sentence structure parallels with the sentence *jue wei wei de* 厥豐唯德 in the 4th line of the inscription. Both phrases follow this syntax:

jue 厥 + a noun + *wei* 唯 + a verb-object word group.

In *jue wei wei de* 厥豐唯德, the character *de* 德 means “having virtue or being virtuous.” It is in the same verb-object word group structure as *xietian* 協天, meaning “to accord with (the way of) Heaven.” Therefore I propose that *jue wei wei de* 厥豐唯德 literally means “(Yu’s) untiring achievements are due to (his having) Virtue”, and that (*jue*) *hungou yi wei xie tian* (厥) 婚媾亦唯協天 literally means “(their) marriage unions are also due to (their being) in accordance with (the way of) Heaven.”

Suigong 遂公 vs. Bingong 邕公

The phrase we are considering here is the name of the *gong* 公 (“duke”), 邕, that appears at the end of the inscription. Should 邕公 be transcribed as Suigong 遂公 or Bingong 邕公? This has been a point of disagreement since the inscription first began to be transcribed. Li, supported by scholars such as Zhou, transcribes the name of the *gong* 邕 as *sui* 遂. Similar to Li’s argument, Gao Huaping 高華平 suggests that it be transcribed as *sui* 燧.⁵⁵ Qiu, joined by scholars such as Jao, transcribes 邕 as *bin* 邕. In March of 2003, Liu Yu 劉雨 was invited to give a keynote speech on the Suigong *xu* at the Dartmouth College workshop. The title of his speech was “Bingong kao” 邕公考 (an examination of Bingong), so he referred to 邕公 as Bingong. As a result, the title Bingong has become more popular than Suigong outside China. Many scholars, including Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚,⁵⁶ Li Ling 李零,⁵⁷ and Sarah Allan (Ai Lan),⁵⁸ are undecided regarding

55. Gao Huaping 高華平, “Chutu wenxian erti: Shi Sui—Jianlun Suigong xu zhong zhi ‘Suigong’” 出土文獻二題·釋燧——兼論燧公盨中之“燧公,” *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* 中國文化研究 Autumn (2004), 135–39.

56. Zhu Fenghan, “X-gong xu mingwen chushi,” 28–34.

57. Li Ling, “Lun X-gong xu faxian de yiyi,” 35–45.

58. Ai Lan 艾蘭 (Sarah Allan), “Qianxi X-gong xu” 淺析燧公盨, in *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu yu xueshushi: Li Xueqin jiaoshou kangli qishi shouqing jinian wenji* 中國古代文明研究與學術史: 李學勤教授伉儷七十壽慶紀念文集 eds. Jiang Linchang, et al. (Baoding: Hebei daxue, 2006), 34–38.

the transcription of this graph and use the direct transcription of the graph 𣎵 to refer to this controversial character.

Different approaches of paleographical investigations have resulted in different conclusions in the decipherment and transcription of the graph 𣎵. To give a succinct account, instead of dissecting and examining the graph itself and its components, most scholars, who support the transcription of Bingong, by and large choose to follow the tradition, as documented in the *Jinwen gulin* 金文詁林 and the *Jinwen bian* 金文編, of transcribing the graph 𣎵 as the character *bin* 𠄎. Chen Yingjie 陳英傑 is the only scholar who has done component analysis of the graph 𣎵 and yet reads it as *bin*. His paleographical analysis, however, leads him to transcribe the graph as *jian* 𣎵 (“fire dies”), with components of *huo* 火 (“fire”), *qin* 𠄎 (“eagerly”), and *yue* 曰 (“words”), and to read it as *bin* 𠄎.⁵⁹ As we can see, despite the fact Chen’s analysis leads to a reading of *bin*, which is in agreement with the conclusion of the other scholars mentioned above, they take different paleographic approaches and also have different interpretations, i.e. 𣎵 as *jian* 𣎵 and 𣎵 as *bin* 𠄎. Clearly, this reflects the difficulty of supporting the transcription of *bin* through paleographic analysis based on the components of 𣎵. Moreover, Chen does not explain where the component *yue* 曰 of *jian* 𣎵 comes from. As I understand the evidence of the bronze and bamboo slip inscriptions that he cites, it supports a transcription of *jian* 𣎵 (“untrustworthy; false”), i.e., an interpretative transcription for 𣎵, rather than that of 𣎵, which is the direct transcription for 𣎵.⁶⁰ As Professor Li Xueqin points out, 𣎵 and *shi* 豕 are different components and should not be taken as the same.⁶¹ 𣎵, *shi* 豕, and *qin* 𠄎 are also different components and should not be confused with each other. The scholars who support the transcription of Suigong, on the other hand, for the most part start with the analysis of the form of 𣎵 itself. Professor Li Xueqin explains that 𣎵 cannot be transcribed as *xian* (or *pin*) 𣎵 as documented in the *Jinwen bian*, because 𣎵 and *bin* 豕 are two different components (just as 𣎵 and *shi* 豕 are different).⁶² Thus far no scholar has directly rebutted this paleographic argument. If 𣎵 cannot be deciphered as *xian* or *pin* 𣎵, then it cannot be read as *bin* 𠄎 either. Moreover, even though he follows the tradition that transcribes 𣎵 as *xian* 𣎵, Zhou Fengwu still reads the character as *sui* 遂 rather than as *bin* 𠄎. Due to the extent of the disagreement, many scholars

59. Chen Yingjie 陳英傑, “Bingong xu mingwen zaikao” 𣎵公盨銘文再考, *Yuyan kexue* 語言科學 2008.1, 63–77.

60. For a discussion on “direct transcription” and “interpretative transcription,” see Xing Wen, “Towards a Transparent Transcription,” *Asiatische Studien* LIX.1 (2005), 31–60.

61. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 131.

62. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 131–32.

remain undecided regarding this essential graph and choose to refer to it as *X-gong* 夔公 or 夔公. I also have used *X-gong* when I presented their scholarship or wished to avoid instituting any misconceptions.

I have argued that the transcription of an ancient graph must be based on its original written form. This is the essence of the working principles of Transparent Transcription that I have proposed.⁶³ With regard to the *liding* 隸定 transcription of the graph 夔, Professors Li Xueqin and Qiu Xigui both agree that it is to be transcribed as 夔,⁶⁴ which indicates there is no disagreement regarding the direct transcription of the graph. However, they disagree about whether 夔 is in fact the character 夔. If we adhere to the principle of the Transparent Transcription method,⁶⁵ we will not fail to observe that the top part of the graph 夔 is 夔, which, as mentioned above, is very different from 夔. This transcription was proposed by Yang Shuda 楊樹達 (1885–1956) who considered 夔 equivalent to 豕.⁶⁶ This claim, although accepted by many traditional paleographers, cannot be substantiated from the perspective of component analysis. In Xu Shen's 許慎 (ca. 58–174) *Shuo wen* 說文, 夔 and 豕 are treated as two different characters.⁶⁷ As Professor Li Xueqin points out, a large number of sources from both the received and the excavated texts demonstrate that the character 夔 documented in the *Shuowen* as the archaic form of *sui* 肆 repeatedly appears in the *Shi ji* 史記 and *Han shu* 漢書, and that in

63. A transparent transcription approach faithfully presents both the original form of the graph and the transcribing process. It includes 4 clear steps, (1) Tracing Transcription (optional step; used in cases of unknown graphs with no known modern counter parts), (2) Direct Transcription, (3) *Liding* 隸定 (clerically transcribing) Transcription, and (4) Interpretive Transcription. Without providing transparency of transcribing ancient Chinese graphs in a way like Transparent Transcription, as William Boltz says, "by changing the characters from what the manuscript actually has to what an editor thinks the manuscript intends, especially if these changes are unmarked as departures from the manuscript itself, deprives every other reader and scholar of the chance to decide for himself what the manuscript actually says." See William G. Boltz, "The Study of Early Chinese Manuscript: Methodological Preliminaries," in *The Guodian Laozi: Proceedings of the International Conference, Dartmouth College, May 1998*, ed. Sarah Allan and Crispin Williams (Berkeley: SSEC & IEAS, 2000), 40, and Xing Wen, "Towards a Transparent Transcription," 31–60.

64. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo guodian wenming yanjiu*, 131; Qiu Xigui, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang*, 67.

65. Emphasizing transparency in the process of transcribing and deciphering, Transparent Transcription includes four steps of transcription: Tracing Transcription (TT), Direct Transcription (DT), *Liding* Transcription (LT), and Interpretive Transcription (IT). These steps are selected and engaged as needed. See Xing Wen, "Towards a Transparent Transcription." [redundant?]

66. Yang Shuda 楊樹達, *Jiwei ju jinwen shuo* 積微居金文說 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1997), 154.

67. Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuo wen jie zi* 說文解字 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1963, rpt. 1999), 196–97.

all instances it is written as *sui* 遂 by the Han writers.⁶⁸ In other words, both Xu Shen and Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–87 B.C.E.) take 𨾏, the top component of 𨾏, as *sui* 遂. The very same graph 𨾏, that is inscribed on many other bronze vessels, can also be read as *sui* 遂 in all the transcription and reading options.⁶⁹ The graph 𨾏 has a component of *huo* (fire), which is the reason why some scholars transcribe it as *sui* 燧.⁷⁰ Paleographical resources from bamboo slips and bronze inscriptions published after the Suigong *xu* had been discovered provide additional evidence supporting the credibility of the transcription of 𨾏 as *sui* 遂.⁷¹

To conclude, it is my belief that before 𨾏 can be transcribed as *bin* 𨾏, it must be established that 𨾏 is equivalent to 豕 in ancient China. If such equivalency cannot be demonstrated, then transcribing 𨾏 as *xian/pin* 𨾏, thus *bin* 𨾏, cannot be supported by a faithful paleographical analysis of the graphic form of the character itself; therefore any further phonetic analysis along this line becomes unfounded. Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (?–977) considered 𨾏 and 豕 to be the same character in his *Han jian* 汗簡.⁷² Zheng Zhen 鄭珍 (1806–64) argued that this was a *wuji* 誤記 (mistaken documentation) in his *Han jian jianzheng* 汗簡箋正.⁷³ Based on his rigorous and in-depth paleographic examination on the subject, Zheng concluded that Guo Zhongshu's misunderstanding that 𨾏 and 豕 could be used interchangeably "was an enormous mistake" (*nai jumiu ye* 迺巨謬也).⁷⁴ Another Western Zhou graph 𨾏 with 𨾏 as a component on the top provides further evidence. In the Workshop on the Bronze Vessels Returned Overseas (*Haiwai huiliu qingtongqi guanmo yantaohui* 海外回流青銅器觀摩研討會) held in Shanghai in September, 2005, a Western Zhou vessel, the Boxi *gui* 伯獄簋 inscription including the graph 𨾏, i.e., 肆, with 𨾏 component on the top, was discussed.⁷⁵ As noted above, 𨾏 is the archaic form of *sui* 肆 that has always been written as *sui* 遂 in the

68. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 131.

69. Li Xueqin, *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu*, 131–32.

70. Zhou Fagao 周法高, *Jinwen gulin* 金文詁林 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1975), 1322.

71. Li Xueqin, "Chu jian Dizi wen yu 'sui' zi" 楚簡《弟子問》與“𨾏”字, *Chutu wenxian yanjiu* 出土文獻研究 8 (2007), reprinted in Li Xueqin, *Wenwu zhong de gu wenming* 文物中的古文明 (Beijing: Shangwu, 2008), 485–88.

72. Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕, *Han jian* 汗簡 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983), 27.

73. Zheng Zhen 鄭珍, *Han jian jianzheng* 汗簡箋正 (Guangzhou: Guangya shuju, 19th c.), 4.23b.

74. Zheng Zhen, *Han jian jianzheng*, 4.24a.

75. Chen Quanfang 陳全方, Chen Xin 陳馨, "Xinjian Shang Zhou Qingtongqi guibao" 新見商周青銅器瑰寶, *Shoucang* 收藏 2006.4, plates 6 and 7. Li Xueqin, *Wenwu zhong de gu wenming*, 485–88. Zhu Fenghan, "Wei gui yu Boxi zhuqi" 衛簋與伯獄諸器, *Nankai xuebao* (*Zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 南開學報 (哲學社會科學版), 2008.6, 1–7. Zhang Guangyu 張光裕, "Lecong Tang cang Xi gui ji xinjian Wei gui sanqi mingwen

Shi ji and *Han shu*.⁷⁶ Based on the available paleographic evidence from both the transmitted and excavated textual traditions, I am compelled to argue that X-gong 夔公 is Suigong 遂公.

A Contextual Reconstruction of the Suigong *xu* Inscription

Assuming the Suigong *xu* is indeed genuine, millenniums of social and linguistic evolution stand between the ancient author of the Suigong *xu* inscription and modern readers. Faithful reading of the ancient text comes from a solid understanding of the background context of the inscribed text which comprises its social, historical, and cultural background, and the transmitted and excavated textual materials of the same time period. Placing an inscribed text in the particular background contexts, including but not limited to, those mentioned above, enables us to minimize the interference of the presumptions we inevitably have as modern thinkers, and to maximize our chances to reveal the real meaning conveyed in the text. This is the approach of Contextual Reconstruction, in which I will reconstruct and interpret the original text of the Suigong *xu*.

In the above section I have discussed several major issues concerning the reconstruction of the Suigong *xu* inscription. Despite the many disagreements, leading scholars have been able to reconstruct the inscription into plausible transcriptions in coherent modern language. Why is it that the many different versions of transcription can lead to plausible interpretations of the very same inscribed text? This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the scholars involved possess expert knowledge and profound understanding of the graphs, phrases, and sentences inscribed, which enables them to comprehend the recondite connotations of some of the graphs and to elucidate the thoughts and ideas conveyed therein. As a result, the different views on the details have not derailed them from providing interpretations that share the same basic understanding of the inscription as a whole.

What position, then, should we take with regard to the details in the transcription that are the causes of disagreement? The conventional approach is to investigate each character, phrase, sentence, and the entire text of the inscription, collect relevant materials as supporting evidence from the sources in paleography, phonetics, and textual criticism, etc., to either support or challenge the existent reconstruction and scholarship.

xiaoji” 樂從堂藏獄籛及新見衛籛三器銘文小記, *Zhongshan daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 中山大學學報 (社會科學版), 2009.5, 11–17.

76. Professors Qiu Xigui, Li Jiahao 李家浩 and Wu Zhenwu 吳振武 have alternative interpretations of the graph 馨. See Wu Zhenwu, “Shishi Xi Zhou Xi gui mingwen zhong de ‘xin’ zi” 試釋西周獄籛銘文中的“馨”字, *Wenwu* 2006.11, 61–62.

This is of course a sound approach that I support. However, I also believe that the approach of Contextual Reconstruction is a more analytical and effective method of reconstructing excavated documents.

The Contextual Reconstruction method I propose involves two steps.⁷⁷ First, we must decipher and transcribe each character, and explore its meaning thoroughly; secondly, we must work on a contextual reconstruction of the entire text. The first step involves the analysis of the components, radicals, phonetics, and definitions of each individual character on the excavated object, the investigation of its usage and definition in the particular instance of the phrase or word group in question, and the examination of the meaning of the entire sentence of which the phrase or word group is a part. In this regard, the scholars we have discussed in this article have done an outstanding and exemplary job in the reconstruction of the Suigong *xu* inscription. The second step involves the Contextual Reconstruction method. The principle of this method requires us to focus on the external context and internal context of the excavated text. The external context consists of the non-textual contexts of the excavated material, including archaeological, historical, and intellectual contexts, and its textual context, including the related textual material of the same time period, more specifically the writings and documents from the same geographic region and/or the same time period, and/or the writings expressing similar or even conflicting ideas and beliefs. The internal context includes the textual structure, the rhetorical style, and the literary style of the excavated writing itself.⁷⁸ In the following, I will attempt to reconstruct the Suigong *xu* inscription in a similar way based on its internal context by following the principles of Contextual Reconstruction.

The study of the internal context as part of the Contextual Reconstruction of the Suigong *xu* inscription should start with the analysis of the article structure and sentence structure of the inscribed text. Sentence

77. See note 9 above.

78. My reconstruction work of the *Hengxian* 恒先 (ante-eternity), a Warring States Chu 楚 bamboo slip text in the Shanghai Museum collection, is an example of a reconstruction based on the internal textual structure. See Xing Wen, "Chu jian *Hengxian* shiwen fen zhang" 楚簡《恒先》釋文分章, *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 2010.2, 51–56. For example, my reconstruction of slips 7 and 10 reveals the internal parallel structure of the text, as I argued in "The Division into Sections and Interpretation of the Chu Script Bamboo Slip Manuscript *Hengxian* 恒先," Association for Asian Studies annual meeting presentation (Philadelphia, March, 2010). However, the official transcription published by the Shanghai Museum fails to see the internal textual structure and thus mis-reconstructs the original text. See Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu (san)* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 (三) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2003), 294–96.

structure and article structure are intertwined in the Suigong *xu* inscription, hence cannot be studied separately. The key to understanding the article structure of the Suigong *xu* inscription is to identify the subject words used in the text. According to my previous research, these characters *Tian* 天 (Heaven), *Yu* 禹, *min* 民 (people), and Suigong 遂公 have been identified as subject words, serving as the subject of the sentence in this sequence.⁷⁹ However, my previous study of the inscription failed to incorporate the examination of the sentence structure. Taking the approach of the Contextual Reconstruction method to consider the internal context of the Suigong *xu*, I will argue that the sentence structure of the Suigong *xu* in effect marks the paragraph divisions in the Suigong *xu* inscription.

Let's look at the phrase *jue wei wei de* 厥豐唯德 ("the achievements of the untiring Yu come from his Virtue") in the 4th line of the Suigong *xu* inscription. As explained earlier in this article, this sentence follows the syntax of "*jue* 厥 + noun + *wei* 唯 + verb-object word group." With the auxiliary word *jue* 厥 added in the front, the same sentence structure reappears in (*jue*) *hungou yi wei xie tian* (厥) 婚媾亦唯協天 ([their] marriage unions are also [their act] in accordance with [the way of] Heaven) in the 7th and 8th lines of the inscription. From the perspective of the grammatical structure of the entire text, the two *jue* 厥 . . . *wei* 唯 . . . sentence structures also signal the new paragraphs in the text. The text before *jue wei wei de* 厥豐唯德 gives an account for *tian ming Yu fu tu* 天命禹敷土 ("Heaven ordains Yu to chart the earth") and for all the achievements of the untiring Yu:

天命禹敷土。(禹)隨山濬川，迺差方設征，降民監德。(禹)
迺自作配，鄉民，成父母，生我王，作臣。厥豐唯德。

Heaven ordains Yu to chart the earth. (Yu) channels the river into the path formed by the mountain ranges. Thus (Yu) delineates the land, designates taxes. Consequently, people multiply. (Yu) supervises the practice of Virtue (of the people in the land). (Yu) becomes the incarnation/partner (of Heaven). (Yu) guides his people, and enables the parents to play their parental role. Thus our King is born, and our officials are established. The achievements of the untiring Yu come from his Virtue.

In the text following this part and prior to *hungou yi wei xie tian* 婚媾亦唯協天, the inscription gives an account for *min hao ming de* 民好明德 and for how people love Virtue and act in accordance with Virtue:

79. Xing Wen, "Suigong xu ming de fenduan," 53–55; and "Shiwen yu shijing," 117–26.

民好明德，優在天下。（民）用厥邵好，益干（？）懿德，康亡不懋。（民）孝友訏明，經齊好祀，無悖心。（民）好德，（厥）婚媾亦唯協天。

People love shining Virtue. They live a harmonious life under Heaven. Good continues to flourish; Virtue is sought after; (Good and Virtue) are extensive and the pursuit of all. People are filial to their parents and kind to their brothers; they behave with integrity and honesty. They are faithful in offering sacrifices. They are virtuous and guileless. (People) love Virtue. Their marriage unions are also in accordance with (the Way of) Heaven.

In other words, the main body of the Suigong *xu* inscription, which is the part that provides a historical record, consists of two paragraphs that end with the two exclamatory sentences *jue wei wei de* 厥豐唯德 and with (*jue*) *hungou yi wei xie tian* (厥) 婚媾亦唯協天 respectively.

Of the two paragraphs, the first talks about Yu's untiring achievements, and the second talks about how the common people love Virtue and act in accordance to the mandates of Heaven. Thus a clear structure of the text emerges from the inscription. In the part that follows, it is logical for the text to continue with an account of how Yu and the people are rewarded for their virtuous deeds followed by some remarks by the author of the inscription:

（天）釐用考神，復用祿祿，永御于寧。
遂公曰：“民唯克用茲德，亡悔。”

(Heaven) bestows upon the people longevity and divine blessings, rewards them with happiness and wealth, and ensures peace and stability in the land.

Suigong said, "If all people are able to follow the Virtue herein described, then they will be free from regrets."

To summarize our discussion so far, the principles of Contextual Reconstruction, coupled with the investigation of the graphs involved, will promises a smoother reading of the inscription. Based on the analysis of the sentence structure and article structure described above, I then reconstruct the Suigong *xu* inscription as the following:

天命禹敷土。隨山濬川，迺差方設征，降民監德。迺自作配，鄉民，成父母，生我王，作臣。厥豐唯德。

民好明德，優在天下。用厥邵好，益干（？）懿德，康亡不懋。孝友訏明，經齊好祀，無悖心。好德，婚媾亦唯協天。

釐用考神，復用祓祿，永御于寧。
遂公曰：“民唯克用茲德，亡悔。”

The English translation for the above reconstruction is provided in the next section.

The Suigong Xu Inscription: A Translation

There are several different English translations of the Suigong *xu* inscription. Below is a chronological list of the publications:

1. Sarah Allan, “Some preliminary comments on the 夔公盨,” in *The X Gong Xu 夔公盨: A Report and Papers from the Dartmouth Workshop*, ed. Xing Wen, A Special Issue, *International Research on Bamboo and Silk Documents: Newsletter*, 3.2–6 (2003), 16–22.
2. Constance A. Cook, “Bin Gong xu and Sage-king Yu: Translation and Commentary,” in *The X Gong Xu 夔公盨: A Report and Papers from the Dartmouth Workshop*, ed. Xing Wen, A Special Issue, *International Research on Bamboo and Silk Documents: Newsletter*, 3.2–6 (2003), 23–28.
3. Ai Lan 艾蘭, “Qianxi x-gong xu” 淺析夔公盨, in *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu yu xueshushi: Li Xueqin jiaoshou kangli qishi shouqing jinian wenji* 中國古代文明研究與學術史: 李學勤教授伉儷七十壽慶紀念文集, ed. Jiang Linchang, et al. (Baoding: Hebei daxue, 2006), 34–38.
4. Edward L. Shaughnessy, “The Bin Gong Xu Inscription and the Origins of the Chinese Literary Tradition,” in *Books in Numbers: Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Harvard-Yenching Library, Conference Papers*, ed. Wilt Idema (Hong Kong: The Chinese University, 2007), 3–21.
5. Constance A. Cook, “Sage King Yu 禹 and the Bin Gong xu 鬲公盨,” *Early China* 35–36 (2012–13), 69–103.

The English translation below provided by Chen Shu 陳舒 is based on Xing Wen’s contextual reconstruction and interpretation presented in this article. Both the author and the translator would like to acknowledge the scholarship cited in this article because it greatly inspired and facilitated the present reconstruction and interpretation. The English translation includes two parts: a word-by-word literal translation (LT) and a line-by-line interpretive translation (IT). A forward slash (/) is used to separate each word in the LT.

天命禹敷土。

LT: Heaven / ordains / Yu / to chart / the earth.

IT: Heaven ordains Yu to chart the earth.

隨山濬川，迺差方設征，降民監德。

LT: (Yu) follows / the mountain ranges / (and) channels / the river (into the path). / Thus / (Yu) delineates / the land, / designates / taxes. / Propagates / people. / Supervises / the practice of Virtue.

IT: Yu channels the river into the path formed by the mountain ranges. Thus (Yu) delineates the land, and designates taxes. Consequently, people multiply. (Yu) supervises the practice of Virtue (of the people in the land).

迺自作配，鄉民，成父母，生我王，作臣。

LT: (Yu) thus / himself / makes / a partner (of Heaven), / guides / (his) people /, makes / (the parents to play the role of the) parents. / Gives birth to / our / Lord, / (and) establishes / (our) officials.

IT: (Yu) conjoins with (Heaven). (Yu) guides his people, and enables the parents to play their parental roles. Thus our King is born, and our officials are established.

厥豐唯德。

LT: The / achievements of the untiring (Yu) / come from / (his) Virtue.

IT: The achievements of the untiring Yu come from his Virtue.

民好明德，優在天下。

LT: People / love / shining / Virtue. / (They live) a harmonious (life) / under / Heaven.

IT: People love shining Virtue. (They live) a harmonious life under Heaven.

用厥邵好，益干（？）懿德，康亡不懋。

LT: Therefore / that / continues / Good; / to further / seek after / Virtue; / (Good and Virtue) are prevalent / (and) nothing / is not / to be pursued, the pursuit of all.

IT: Good continues to flourish; Virtue is sought after (?); (Good and Virtue) are prevalent and are the pursuit of all.

孝友訏明，經齊好祀，無悖心。

LT: (People are) filial to their parents / (and) kind to their brothers; / (they) behave with integrity / (and) honesty. / (They are) faithful / in offering sacrifices. / (They) do not have / rebellion / intentions.

IT: (People are) filial to their parents and kind to their brothers; (they) behave with integrity and honesty. (They) are faithful in offering sacrifices. (They) are virtuous and guileless.

好德，婚媾亦唯協天。

LT: (Due to people's) love of / Virtue. / (Their) marriage / unions / (are) also / (their act) in accordance with / (the Way of) Heaven.

IT: (Due to people's) love of Virtue, their marriage unions are also (their act) in accordance with (the Way of) Heaven.

釐用考神，復用祓祿，永御于寧。

LT: (Heaven) bestows (upon the people) / with / longevity / (and) divine blessings, / rewards (them) / with / happiness / (and) wealth, / (and ensures) long / peace / (and) stability (in the land.)

IT: Heaven bestows upon the people longevity and divine blessings, rewards them with happiness and wealth, and ensures peace and stability (in the land).

遂公曰：“民唯克用茲德，亡悔。”

LT: Sui / Gong / said, / “(If all) people / are able to / follow / this / Virtue, / (then they will) not / (have) regrets.”

IT: Suigong said, “If all people are able to follow the Virtue herein described, then they will be free from regrets.”

In conclusion, my transcription of the Suigong *xu* inscription using the Contextual Reconstruction method has revealed that the inscribed text is a document with a distinctly structured content and a clear ideological message to convey. In the process of reconstructing and translating the text, we see that the word choices, the sentence and article structures, the rhetoric style and the main idea in the inscription are complimentary to each other; together they form a cohesive entity that is the entire text itself. The inscription starts with an account of Yu's successful management of the flood, describing his untiring achievements. The text continues with an account of how people love Virtue and that they do nothing discordant with Virtue. These two accounts share the same “*jue* 厥 . . . *wei* 唯 . . .” sentence structure, displaying a pattern of alternating between narration

and commentary. The inscription starts with “Partner with Heaven” and “(Yu) guides his people, and enables the parents to play the role of parents,” and follows up with “Thus our King is born.” After the sovereignty is constituted, it goes on to say that “the officials are established.” The writing exhibits a logical and clear sequential progression of ideas. The entire article emphasizes the idea of *De* 德 (Virtue) and highlights an ideology for peace and harmony. The ideology of promoting Virtue and pursuing peace and harmony is emphatically pronounced in its accounts of people loving Virtue hence living in harmony with the Way of Heaven, of people offering sacrifices faithfully hence being guileless, of people joining in marriage unions in order to act in accordance with the mandates of Heaven, and finally of the lasting peace and stability under Heaven. I conclude that the Contextual Reconstruction method enables us to effectively organize and reconstruct the excavated materials, and furthermore, to accurately comprehend the thoughts and ideas conveyed in the ancient texts.