

A New Interpretation of the Inscription on Huding

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Abstract

This paper reinterprets the second paragraph of inscription on Huding(忽鼎) which concerned with a legal case. The cause of this case was that Hu(忽) colluded with Shi's(氏) subordinate whose name was Xian(限) to sell five persons who belonged to Shi's another subordinate Xiaofu(效父) with a low price. Shi discovered it and made a new contract. However, Shi did not hand over these five persons, so Hu appealed to Jingshu(井叔) who was on an inspection tour and happened to be the protector of Hu. Under the favoritism and shelter of Jingshu , Hu gained these five persons. This paragraph revealed a miniature of how the new noblemen rose and their behavior of clinging to the powerful and rich and obtaining things by force or deception.

In addition to interpreting the difficult words, including *yu*(鬻), *su*(訴), *tiao*(詭) and *ji*(覲), this paper also analyzes the meanings of *xiaozi*(小子), *sanmen*(參門), *mufang*(木方) and *wangren*(王人). Besides, this paper also discusses the real condition of the noblemen's life and the construction of the social organization in ancient China. Finally, this paper explains the meanings of the full text and the ins and outs of the event in detail.

Keywords: Huding, history of law, wangren (men belonged to King of Zhou), xiaozi(young fellow) , mufang (wooden plate)