

## An Open Letter to the People of China:

### 给中国人民的一封公开信：

We are writing to ask that you help correct a wrong that is currently being suffered by the Chinese people. Perhaps we are stating this a bit bluntly, but please read on.

我们写信给您，是希望得到您的帮助，来改善对一个伟大工程的看法而让中国人民免受煎熬。恕我们坦率，请您继续往下看。

The Chinese people are a great people, inventive, hard-working, and especially accomplished at water control. The control of water has been very important in the advance of civilization. The peoples of China have led the nations of the world in showing the way to control water for irrigation, transportation, and flood control. Yet some of China's great contributions to world civilization remain obscure, unknown to the world, and little known even in China itself. And this is our concern.

伟大的中国人民，勤劳，智慧，尤其在水利治理方面更是巧夺天工。在人类的文明历史进程中，水利工程极为重要。聪明的中国祖先在水利工程的灌溉，运输和洪水治理上领先于世界。然而，有些对于世界文明发展做出重大贡献的遗迹至今却默默无闻，不为世界所知，哪怕在中国也鲜为人知。这正是我们在关注的地方。

We speak of the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal in Xing'an County, 60 Km north of Guilin in Guanxi Province, and its current deplorable condition. Do you know of this canal?

我们所说的是灵渠-神奇的运输运河目前的凄凉现状，她在离桂林以北 60 公里的兴安镇上。您知道这神奇的运河吗？

The Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal has a history that goes back more than 2,200 years. It was ordered constructed by the Chin leader who came to call himself Shi Huangdi, China's first emperor, the unifying dynasty that gave China its name. The canal was built to supply troops sent south into the Pearl River drainage, critical to the Emperor's plan to bring the various peoples of the region under a single government, his government. He went on to establish uniform systems of weights, measures, language, and tax payments, but the point we are making is that the construction of the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal was critical to the creation of China more than 2,200 years ago.

灵渠有 2200 多年的历史，是秦始皇这中国的第一位皇帝为统一中国，向珠江运送军需粮草而修建的。秦始皇在灵渠-神奇的运输运河修建成功后不久就统一中国版图，自称始皇帝，统一了中国的度量衡，语言文字和税收制度。而我们的重点是想说这个水利工程，神奇的运输运河-灵渠从 2200 年前开始对中国文明发展一直发挥着重要的作用。

Designed and constructed under the direction of chief engineer Shi Lu, the canal, a thirty-kilometer-long artificially-dug waterway, connects the north-flowing Xiang River, a tributary of the Yangtze, with the south-flowing Li River, which eventually flows into the Pearl River. The Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is credited with being the first-in-history contour-level canal connecting two drainage systems. The Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is not just the oldest such canal, it is the first, made possible by ingenious design, Chinese genius, and the labor of thousands, Chinese labor. Its important innovations include a spade-snout-shaped obstruction to divide the waters of the Xiang, with additional low dams and weirs directing a sufficient and stable supply of water necessary to operate barges and boats along the canal while sending excess water back into the Xiang River. The canal's thirty+ kilometer route along a contour between the two river basins also an important feature of the ancient treasure.

历史人物史禄设计与督导了灵渠的建造，该渠有 30 公里为人工挖掘，她一手与北边的长江支流湘江相连，另一手牵起漓江而最终汇入珠江。灵渠，这神奇的人工运河，被认为是世界上最早运用了等高法水准测量方法，而连接了两江水系的典范。灵渠不仅仅是一个如此古老的运河，她是第一个以独特的设计，被天才的中国人，和数以万计的中国劳工，使两江相连成为可能。其中最绝美的创新还包含扇形坝分开湘江水流（当地人称铧嘴），蓄水引船的船闸，将多余的水还回湘江的泄水天平。这 30 余公里的运河河道连接着两江水系，是非常有特色的古文化遗产。

For so important an ancient civil engineering success, the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is nearly forgotten in China and the rest of the world outside of the town of Xing'an. It is interesting to note that of the major Chinese physical feats credited to the First Emperor, the Great Wall of China and the Terra-Cotta Warriors are famous, while the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is little known. All three cost many lives and much treasure, but only the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal brought significant change and progress to the people of China. And yet, the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is, by far, the least known of the three. This wrong should be corrected.

如此重要，古老也成功的水利工程，灵渠-神奇的运输运河几乎被兴安以外的世人所遗忘。值得一提的是秦始皇时代中国最主要的三个人工工程壮举，其中万里长城和秦始皇兵马俑为全世界广泛知晓，只有灵渠默默无闻。这三个工程都是耗尽国力，用许多劳动人民的生命换来的，也是万分珍贵的文化古迹。只有灵渠-神奇的运输运河给后世中国做出了长久而意味深长的贡献，但是她却是这三个伟大工程中为人知之甚少的一个。我们有必要了更多地了解灵渠。

Technical knowledge gained from construction of the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal led to completion of China's famous Grand Canal some eight centuries later. In addition, Língqú technology made possible the "Canal Age" in Europe (from about 1750 to 1850), a critical component of Europe's Industrial Revolution (Clark, Ronald W, *Works of Man*, 1985, p. 87). The

importance of the canal in world history cannot be over-stated. The Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal should be among the most famous and frequently-visited sites in China, it is so important to the history of China, and made such a contribution to the progress of world civilization.

Unfortunately, for China and the rest of the world, the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is little known and almost forgotten outside Xing'an, although it has been nominated by the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for recognition as a United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.

灵渠-神奇的运输运河，其巧妙的工程设计与建设给八个世纪后的中国的大运河时代做出重大贡献。而且，灵渠的技术也使欧洲的运河时代成为可能，1750年-1850年欧洲的工业革命也有灵渠设计的影响（出自 Clark, Ronald W 的《人类发明史》，1985年出版，第87页）。在历史长河中，运河的重要地位是无法说得完全的。灵渠在当时是世界上最有名的，也是被欧洲人访问的最多的中国地方之一。是中国历史重要的一部分，同时为世界文明进步做出巨大贡献。不幸的是，在兴安以外的中国或者世界，灵渠鲜为人知，几乎被外人遗忘，尽管目前被中国国家委员会提名，希望被联合国教科文组织重视为世界遗产。

The present condition of the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is a mixture of good, fair, and poor. The canal has not been used for transportation along its entire length for more than fifty years, superseded by highway and rail (the Xianggui rail line was completed in 1939). Of its approximately 35 kilometer total length, only the first few kilometers are well-restored, well-protected, and still in use as a transportation canal, albeit just as a local tourist attraction. The critical spade-snout, dams, weirs, and approximately three kilometers of canal are restored and protected under the Scenic Spot of the Língqú Canal, which provides tours and charges admission. The next approximately two kilometers of canal run through a traditional canal-centered market area of the town of Xing'an, Water Street. These good sections add to maybe five kilometers in length. The restored canal continues west for another few hundred yards. Beyond that, water continues to flow west along the canal's ancient route through Xing'an, but the canal itself is barely identifiable. Within the built-up area of western Xing'an, especially, the canal's condition is poor. Its former route appears to be encroached upon by structures. Its tow-path is non-existent. In places, it is choked with vegetation, preventing travel. In one place, it has been used as the route of a giant sewer pipe. In another, it has been impinged upon by loads of gravel for nearby construction. Farther west, beyond the built-up area of Xing'an, the canal's condition is better, choked with vegetation in some places, neglected, but not so damaged, with a new bicycle path (a real gem) alongside part of the way.

灵渠的现状让人欢喜让人忧，火车运输在1939年湘桂铁路通车后完全取代了灵渠的运输功能。在她全长约37公里的河道里，只有前几公里被恢复，保护起来，为吸引游客泛舟，这几公里依然保留运输功能。重要的扇形坝（当地人称铧嘴）泄水天平，蓄水坝和大约3公里的运河水道被当地政府完好地保留起来作为旅游收费风景区。紧接着大约2公里的运河河道流过传统的运河

区域水街。这些保护比较好的区域合计 5 公里。随后运河向西，流过大概几百位农家的门前。之后水流继续向西穿越兴安，但已很难辨认是运河。尤其在扩建规划区域，运河的情况很糟。她原有的河渠通道似乎被建筑物蚕食，纤道不复存在了。在那里，被堵塞为菜地妨碍行走，有一段其河运通道被改为巨大的下水管道。还有一个地方被靠近的建筑物连接为卸载沙石的地方。再往西走，在兴安城之外，运河河道的情况要好些。尽管被忽略，有些地方被填为菜地，但是没有损坏，沿运河河道新修了一条 7 公里的自行车车道，这真是给灵渠镶了一块宝石。

We invite you to tour the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal so you can see for yourself.

We have a preliminary list of goals to suggest for renovation and restoration of the Língqú:

1. Remove vegetation and low footbridges that block navigation in several places along the canal's route;
2. Restore the towpath and remove impinging structures to restore the canal's historic configuration;
3. Re-route the concrete pipe from the canal's route, and protect the route from encroachment;
4. Increase the flow of water in the canal sufficient for tourist-type navigation, using weirs as necessary, similar to the technology currently in use for bamboo rafting on the Yulong River, some 100 kilometers to the south of Xing'an, near Yangshuo. (If you are unfamiliar with this technology, which uses narrow spillways allowing rafts to travel along a river in spite of low water volume, we invite you to take a commercial rafting trip on the Yulong River);
5. Protect the western end of the artificial canal, where it joins the natural tributary to the Li River, using a gate, weir, lock, or other navigable obstruction;
6. Expand efforts to establish bicycle paths and other recreational facilities associated with the canal's route west to the Li River; and
7. Promote addition of English and other international languages to directional signs and information postings in Xing'an and in the vicinity of the canal, to attract more international visitors.

我们邀请您参观灵渠，这样您可以亲眼看到这一切。

为了恢复灵渠当年的繁华，我们有初步建议如下：

1. 移走菜地和低矮的人行简易桥，还原渠道，让船能在这 34 公里的河道通畅航行。
2. 还原纤道，移走阻碍运河原结构的建筑物还原灵渠历史原貌。
3. 还原灵渠下水道渠道，并且保护渠道不会被蚕食。
4. 增加运河水量，启动蓄水坝。像离兴安 100 公里外的遇龙河一样，让游客可以体验水上漂流。（这种技术，就是在水量不够时在下游合适

- 位置堵截水流而蓄水以满足航行的做法。诚邀您体验遇龙河的竹筏漂流。) )
5. 保护西边的人工运河，那边汇入漓江的天然支流，那里应该设立船闸，大坝，或其它措施保护航运正常运行。
  6. 大力发展自行车道，同时在向西的岸边建立相关设施让大家轻松体验灵渠文化。
  7. 在兴安及灵渠周边追加英语指示标识，以吸引更多的国外游客。

Perhaps there are already plans to accomplish these and/or other goals for restoration and renovation of the canal. If so, we invite you to support and help implement these plans, consistent with bringing recognition that the canal and the people of China deserve. Please let us-work together to help correct this wrong and make the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal famous for the deserving people of China: past, present and future.

也许这些已经被列入施工计划，或有其它的改造目标。如果真是这样，希望您能够关注这些计划，并协助其顺利实施，同时一如既往地坚持让全世界人知道，这是中华民族的灵渠-神奇的运输运河应得的认可和荣誉。请让我们一起帮助灵渠，中国人民理应享受这著名的运河美丽的光环，不论是过去，现在，还是将来。

Sincerely,

Jim Stenbridge, PhD

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地理学者，旅行者，独立学者，尤其喜欢  
灵渠的人。

美国俄勒冈州萨勒姆市



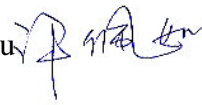
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许佩如

Chinese and English Language Guide with  
specialization in Língqú 灵渠 Magic  
Transport Canal

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#### NOTES 笔记：

- A. Many of the Internet resources on the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal are in Chinese and only accessible through websites in Chinese, so we may not have had access to the most recent planning documents available. Because of the international importance of the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal, we recommend that the documents be made easily available in English or another western language. 很多网上关于灵渠的资料必须登陆中文的网页，由于语言障碍可能我们没有能看到最新的计划资料，由于灵渠曾经举世闻名，我们希望能够有英语或其它西方语言的资料，让大家可以轻松地获取灵渠信息。

- B. Historically, the Línqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal has been known as the Xing'an Canal, and has been known by other names. It was first described in detail in English by Joseph Needham in his work *Science and Civilisation in China*, (Volume IV:3, Civil Engineering, 1970, Pages 299-306). Needham used the name "Magic Transport Canal", so we have combined names in an effort to eliminate confusion. 在历史上, 灵渠被称为兴安运河或其它的名字, 在英籍科学家李约瑟的《中国的科学与文明》(该书又名《中国科学技术史》)中他用到“神奇的运输运河”, 所以我们联合使用了灵渠-神奇的运输运河这个名字以免误会产生。(该信息出自《中国的科学与文明》第六章, 土木工程, 1970年, 第 299-306 页。)
- C. Local officials have done a fine job preserving the course of the Línqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal and maintaining its flow consistent with current use of the canal. This letter is not meant as criticism in any way. Rather, this letter is an appeal that additional restoration effort, national and international, be devoted to this important cultural resource. 当地政府成功地保存了灵渠的水流, 维护了运河的灌溉功能。这封信不是在任何形式上的批判, 其实是在恳求更努力地把中国的, 世界的伟大文化资源传承下去。
- D. A recent feature article in the American magazine *Time* repeated the often-heard opinion that the Chinese are good at copying ideas that foreigners have created, but are not good at creating new ideas or new products. The Línqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is evidence of important world invention on the part of the ancient Chinese, and should be a source of special pride in China. Instead, the Línqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is virtually unknown outside China, and little known even in China. 美国《时代》杂志总是在习惯性地主张中国人不善于自己创造, 而善于复制抄袭外国人的成果。灵渠是古中国人伟大的世界性的发明, 是中国人尤其引以为豪的证据, 然而灵渠的现状, 事实上不为外人所知, 哪怕在中国, 更别说世界上的知名度。
- E. The Línqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is especially valuable because so many of its features have survived for more than 2,000 years and are readily apparent in the landscape. These features include the spade-snout, the low dams, the balancing weirs, and the canal's route. Many other parts still remaining date from renovations and restorations from the late Qing Dynasty (Nineteenth Century) and earlier. Elements of the world-famous Grand Canal, on the other hand, have been reworked so often that virtually nothing ancient remains to be seen. 灵渠作为世界遗产尤其可贵之处而在于 2200 多年前设计建造的细节特征被完整地沿用下来, 现在依然默默奉献在当初的地方。这些特征包含分流的扇型坝(当地人称铧嘴), 蓄水引船的低坝, 平衡水位的堰以及运河河道走向设计。这些任何一个都是完美无缺的设计, 经历了 2200 多年繁忙的航运竟无一需要更改完善而使用至 70 年前铁路通车。还有很多其它的设计技术为后世清朝的运河提供了经验。而京杭运河的基础被历朝历代完善, 重修, 事实上已经看不到当初的原形了。
- F. It is ironic that the Great Wall of China and the Terra-Cotta Warriors are world-famous, but the Línqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is not. The real meaning of Great Wall of China—perhaps China's best known landmark—built to protect China from invading hordes from the north, is controversial—it is viewed by some people as a symbol of China's isolation. The significance of the Terra-Cotta Warriors is also controversial, sometimes thought to be the First Emperor's desperate grasp for immortality, the deviant result of his personal megalomania and superstition. These famous tourist attractions perpetuate a false reputation for China. The Línqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal, alone among the three great earthworks of the First Emperor, has lasting positive meaning for China and the world. The Línqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal should be the most famous tourist attraction in China. This is the wrong that needs correcting. 具有讽刺意味的是, 中国的万里长城和秦始皇兵马俑闻名于世界, 而灵渠却没有这么大的名气。长城是中国的地标, 当年修建她是为了保护中国不受北方游牧民族的侵犯而备受争议, 被认为是古中国闭关锁国的象征。秦始皇兵马俑的重大意义也备受争议, 被认为是秦始皇离经叛道, 迷信, 希望抓住长生不老的最后一搏。万里长城, 兵马俑, 传递给西方访客的名声是建造者当初的意图,

是一种消极的意义。而神奇的运输运河-灵渠，作为秦始皇几个伟大的大地艺术品中的一个，是的确对中国和世界的文明发展做出贡献，独特地拥有持久而积极意义。灵渠应当是中国最著名的旅游胜地，这神奇的运输运河才是中国和天才的中国人民的真正象征。希望有一天这个错误能被改正过来。

- G. There is great potential for boosting tourism in the town of Xing'an centered on the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal. Guilin and Yangshuo, international tourist destinations within a few hours' travel of Xing'an, Water Street in Xing'an has the potential of being as busy as Yangshuo's West Street, bringing foreign money into the local economy, especially if the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal becomes a famous international tourism destination.

灵渠有吸引游客的巨大潜力，兴安离国际游客目的地桂林，只有 1.5 小时车程。灵渠的水街有内涵比阳朔的西街更热闹，特别是灵渠的“灵”在被世人所知道后。

- H. Both authors of this letter have visited the Wuzhen Water Town preservation area on the Grand Canal between the cities of Suzhou and Hangzhou, and found it to be a wonderful model of what the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal area could become.

苏杭之间的乌镇水乡保存完好，管理出色，是灵渠完全可以达到的典范。

- I. If the entire 30+ kilometer route of the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal is to be preserved and renovated as a scenic spot, consideration might be given to conservation of the canal's environment, including attention to the several rock quarries that are disfiguring the iconic karst peaks in the area.

如果 30 公里的灵渠河道作为风景区被保护起来，势必考虑保护环境，则灵渠沿途的几个挖山采石场也许丑化了喀斯特地貌的形象。

- J. A forty-year quest was accomplished when the authors of this letter, Stembridge and Xu, arrived in Xing'an and explored the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal for three days in November, 2013. Stembridge had known of the canal from his geography graduate school research, including Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*, from the early 1970s; Xu arranged the visit, assisted in the exploration, and has joined Stembridge in this effort to bring attention to the canal's plight, as well as its importance to China and the world.

本书的作者之一斯坦布里奇早在 1970 年前在地理研究院时，以及李约瑟的书中就认识了这神奇的运输运河-灵渠，于 2013 年 11 月终于达成 40 多年的心愿来到兴安，在许佩如的陪同与语言协助下，亲近灵渠，体会梦中灵渠与现实灵渠的距离。两人共同努力希望世人关注灵渠的困境，也关注灵渠对中国以及世界的重大意义。

- K. An earlier version of this letter was sent in June, 2014, to public officials in China and to prominent Chinese history scholars.

初版于 2014 年 6 月发送给中国公职人员和著名的历史学者。

- L. We have posted our November 2013 photographs of the Língqú 灵渠 Magic Transport Canal—as well as a report on its history and significance on our websites: [www.lingqumagiccanal.com](http://www.lingqumagiccanal.com) (in English) and [灵渠道.com](http://灵渠道.com) (in Chinese). You are welcome to visit the websites.

我们将探访灵渠的相关照片发表在 [www.lingqumagiccanal.com](http://www.lingqumagiccanal.com) (英语) 和 [灵渠道.com](http://灵渠道.com) (汉语)，欢迎您访问该网站。

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