

The Exterior and Interior World of The Qing Calligrapher Yi Bingshou

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement-----	Page 2
Image List -----	Page 4
Introduction-----	Page 5
The Humble Magistrate-----	Page 5
The Context of Mid-Qing Calligraphy-----	Page 6
Following the Great Scholar Su Shi-----	Page 10
The Taste of the Literati-----	Page 12
Wide Range of Calligraphic Abilities-----	Page 14
Sources of Calligraphic Inspiration: Han Stele-----	Page 16
The Zhangqian Stele-----	Page 16
The Hengfang Stele-----	Page 20
Application of Clerical Script-----	Page 23
Sources of Calligraphic Inspiration: Bronze works-----	Page 25
Application of Seal Script-----	Page 27
Political Sabotage-----	Page 31
Speech Suppression-----	Page 36
Cautious Speaking and Outspokenness-----	Page 37
Conclusion-----	Page 40
Appendix I, Bibliography-----	Page 41
Appendix II, Author's Classical Chinese Translation-----	Page 43
Appendix III, Image-----	Page 47

Image List

- Figure 1. Yi Bingshou, *Sui Xing Cao Tang* 遂性草堂, Ink on Paper, 1815
- Figure 2. Hutu Li, *Military report*, Example of Guange script, Ink on Paper, 1806
- Figure 3, Zhang Zhao, *Imitation of Mi Fu's script Cao Zhi's poem*, Ink on Paper
- Figure 4. Yi Bingshou, *Running script on Hanging Scroll*, Ink on Paper, 1811
- Figure 5.0, Yi Bingshou's Scholarly Rock , “*Descending Goose Peak*”, Scholarly Limestone
- Figure 6 Imperial Collection, Rocks from Lake Tai, Beihai Park, China
- Figure 7 Imperial Collection, *Jade miniature mountain with figure of arhat* , undated
- Figure 8 Yi Bingshou, *Essay on the Qin dynasty Standard Script*, Ink on Paper, undated
- Figure 9 Wang Xizhi, “*Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion*, Ink on Paper, Tang dynasty copies
- Figure 10 Yi Bingshou, Copies of *Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion*, Ink on Paper, Undated
- Figure 11.0 Original Zhangqian stele stone, Image edited by the author
- Figure 12.0 Original Hengfang Stele, Stone Rubbings ,Stone Rubbings, 168 CE
- Figure 12.1 Yi Bingshou, Copies of Hengfang Stele, undated
- Figure 13.0 Liu Qijin, Collection of Su Shi's Script and written in Su Shi's text, Photo,1991
- Figure 13.1 Yi Bingshou, Su Shi's Memorial to Wang Zhaoyun, Photo 1801
- Figure 14.0 Yi Bingshou, Seal Script, Ink on Paper, undated
- Figure 15 Yi Bingshou, Seal script, Ink on Paper, 1804. undated
- Figure 16 Yi Bingshou,Running script on a Fan, Ink on Paper , undated
- Figure 17, Yi Bingshou, *Running script Hanging Scroll*, Ink on Paper , P54, undated
- Figure 18 Yi Bingshou Reflecting yourself and Speak Cautiously 1814, 省躬慎言

Introduction

Chinese calligraphy is primarily an art of applying shifting force and direction to a soft-headed ink brush in order to produce subtly varied characters. There are five major script styles: seal script, clerical script, running the script, cursive script, and standard script. In China, calligraphy has been recognized as a major artistic activity since 200 BCE, and it was widely practiced by intellectuals. It has also generated a considerable body of pre-modern and contemporary critical literature, much of which consists of stylistic analysis. Up until the 1980s and 90s, art historians still discussed calligraphy in terms of formal handling, and more often than not, they failed to consider the social context in which calligraphy was made. In this thesis, I investigate the social and political background of the calligraphy and poems created by the well-known Qing Dynasty calligrapher Yi Bingshou 伊秉綬 (1754-1815).

The Humble Magistrate

Yi Bingshou was born in an intellectual family. His father was a *jinshi* 進士 which is roughly equivalent to a Ph.D in the Chinese bureaucratic system. Yi Bingshou received his own *jinshi* degree at the age of 35 and went on to become the local magistrate of Huizhou 惠州 and Yangzhou 揚州 from 1799 to 1805. In the official history, *Draft History of Qing* 清史稿, the historians recognized Yi Bingshou as an honorable official. The text summarizes his career quite possibly:

[Yi Bingshou] inquired about the suffering of the people and eliminated excessive and unfair regulations. In applying the law, he did not spare powerful families and demonstrated thorough knowledge of the statutes. The senior clerks often tried to pass heavy punishments on people, but in many cases Yi Bingshou, the magistrate, enacted more lenient sentences.¹

¹ *Draft History of Qing*, vol. 265, *Yi Bingshou's Zhuan* 《列傳二百六十五》

He is, however, more famous for his clerical scripts and running scripts than his political career. Yi Bingshou was one of the best stele school calligraphers. In his official capacity as an administrator, he practiced calligraphy, and often gave calligraphy as gifts to his friends and colleagues. Today, his surviving works often garner high prices at auctions. For example, the Beijing Poly auction house sold Yi Bingshou's *Sui Xing Cao Tang* 遂性草堂 (Figure 1) handscroll for \$3.5 million in 2014. Yet, in order to fully understand the value of his calligraphy, it is important to investigate the larger context of Mid-Qing calligraphy, the source of his calligraphic inspiration, his beliefs, and his personal challenges.

The Context of Mid-Qing Calligraphy

Starting from the late Ming dynasty to the middle of the Qing dynasty (around 1650 to 1802), the grand calligraphic style underwent considerable change. The stele school of calligraphy, *beixue* 碑學, had gradually undermined the powerful influences of the traditional school of calligraphy, *tiexue* 帖學. I will use terms such as “traditional style” and “stele style” to refer back to these two styles in the following discussion. The scholar Bai Qianshen 白謙慎 demonstrates this dramatic shift in Chinese calligraphy. By pointing to several external factors, including the excavation of the ancient steles, shifts in public preferences, and the emergence of seal culture.² So it is important to analyse the broader context of Qing calligraphy and outline the external factors before addressing the particular features of Yi Bingshou's calligraphy in the next chapter.

² Qianshen Bai. *Fu Shan's world: the transformation of Chinese calligraphy in the seventeenth century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center. (2003), Chapter 1

Two types of calligraphic trends became popular at the same time in Qing China. The Manchu emperor and the court were fond of the traditional style usually referring to running script, cursive script, and standard script, whereas intellectuals tended to embrace the stele style, including seal script and clerical script. During the early Qing dynasty, emperor Kangxi 康熙 (1654-1722) collected many calligraphic works in the traditional style. The art historian Liu Heng pointed out that Kangxi was obsessed with Dong Qichang's 董其昌 calligraphy and its refined style. Some leading government officials adopted Dong's style in an effort to flatter the emperor.³ Dong's style later became the standard script of official writing, especially in formal administrative documents. In order to pass the civil service exam, students forced themselves to learn this standard script. Even a stele calligrapher like Yi Bingshou was capable of using it because he was once a student who needed to pass the same exam.

Another branch of Qing intellectuals, however, rejected Dong's style in art making. Instead, they drew inspiration from the archaeological studies and epigraphy and adopted the stylistic archaic clerical and seal scripts. They called themselves "the stele school" who enthusiastically study about the bronze and stone inscriptions that were used almost two thousand years ago.⁴ 金石學

Liao Xintian, a stele school scholar, has proposed three main factors contributing its early formation. First, the tediousness intellectual associated with the *guangeti* 館閣體 (Figure 2), a derivative of Dong's style, and used to write formal documents. Even though every student learned this style, they hardly ever used it for art making because its formal rigidity

³ Heng Liu. *Zhong Guo Shu Fa Shi*. Di 1 ban. Nanjing Shi: Jiangsu jiao yu chu ban she, 1999, 51

⁴ Shen Fu, *Trace of the Brush*. Yale University Press, 1977, 43

discouraged personal variations. Second, Liao underscores the importance of literary inquisitions. The authoritarian government of the Qing actively censored intellectuals: the emperors confiscated many artworks, including the calligraphy of the traditional school. Consequently, many literati adopted the stele school style and viewed it as an oppositional alternative to the government's calligraphic taste. A third factor in the rise of the stele school were the complicated ethnic tensions between the Han Chinese and the Manchurians; despite being the majority, the Han subjected to the rule of the minority Manchurians.⁵

Because so much calligraphy sequestered in the imperial collection during the Qing dynasty, intellectuals like Yi Bingshou had little access to examples from the calligraphic canons. The emperor Kangxi amassed a significant collection of high quality calligraphy and jewelry. These objects currently in the National Palace Museum helps us to understand, the kinds of works that were favored by the emperor — and those that were rejected. For example, Liu Jinku, an art historian, argues that the formation of the imperial “collection” involved normal trade, property confiscation, and sometimes tributes.⁶ For example, the collector Liang Qingbiao 梁清標 offered a luxurious painting called *Bamboo and Sparrow* 竹雀圖 to the court to flatter the emperor. From looking at the collections, it is apparent that the emperor was interested not only in original calligraphic masterpieces, including works by Mi Fu 米芾 and Dong Qichang 董其昌, but also in the work of imitators like Zhangzhao 张照. (Figure 3) More significantly, Qianlong himself loved writing in traditional calligraphy styles. The underlying assumption is clear: the emperors had little or no interest in non-canonical calligraphies, nor did

⁵ Xintian Liao, *Qing dai bei xue shu fa yan jiu: Research on the study of engraving calligraphy (pei hsiue) of Ching dynasty* / Liao Shin-tyan. Chu ban. 初版. Taipei Shi: Taipei shi li mei shu guan, 1993, 43 廖新田

⁶ Jinku Liu, *Nan Hua Bei Du*, Shi tou publication. 2007, 124 刘金库, 南画北渡

their subordinates acquire works by stele calligraphers including Wang Duo 王鐸, Fushan 傅山, and Bada Shanren 八大山人. The Qing imperial collection indicates that: 1) the court was uniquely interested in canonical calligraphy and 2) Yi Bingshou and other stele school calligraphers were, as a result, not favored by the court.

Yet Yi Bingshou has received a significant amount of recognition from his own social circle as well as from late twentieth-century revolutionary Kang Youwei , and modern scholars. Yi Bingshou's close friend an elder calligrapher Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818), commented on the younger man's adaptation of the Han dynasty style: "The solid and artless strokes are the Han style!" One hundred and fifty hundreds years later, 康有為 (1858-1927) recognized Yi Bingshou as the trailblazer and the initiator of the stele school generation.⁷ And more recently scholars Liu Heng has praised Yi Bingshou as a master of the Han style who successfully integrated it into his own writing.⁸ It would seem that only the court ignored Yi Bingshou's talent and his ability to revive ancient Qin and Han calligraphies with apparently crude and artless strokes. Why and how did Yi Bingshou's work gain recognition among his literati friends and later art critics?

There are three underlying assumptions about the larger context of calligraphy. First of all, the court has little interest in purchasing stele school calligraphy. It is possible that a small number of stele style calligraphy is stored in the palace, but much of the imperial collection has yet to be opened to the public. Calligraphers like Yi Bingshou were thus able to explore stele school calligraphy with no interruption from the court. Nor for that matter, did they expect the

⁷ Donglin Wang, *Qing Dai Li Shu Yao Lun*, Shanghai Shuhua Press, 2003, 14

王冬齡 清代隸書要論

⁸ Heng Liu, *Zhong Guo Shu Fa Shi*, Qing Dai Juan, JiangSu Education Press, 1999, 179

劉恆, 中國書法史

court to buy their works. Secondly, the extensive production of the stele style calligraphy was uniquely a literati activity practiced opposition to the aesthetic promoted by the court.

Several common misunderstandings regarding the “stele school” needs to be clarified from the outset. Epigraphy was initially promoted by a famous Song scholar Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) for whom the studies of the stele as a passionate hobby.⁹ Although he collected stone rubbings and wrote extensive commentaries, many of which were known to Yi Bingshou, he did not intended to integrate the characteristics of stele scripts into his own writing, or use epigraphy to establish a new strain of calligraphy. To put it simply, epigraphy was not an established discipline until Qing times.

Following the Great Scholar Su Shi

The teachings of Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) were also important to Yi Bingshou’s formation. Su Shi was a famed scholar, statesman, calligrapher and poet of the Song dynasty. For his vocal opposition to policies that harmed middle and lower income taxpayers, Su was exiled to the city of Huizhou in 1094, and Yi Bingshou was appointed there as the local magistrate 知府 in 1801. There are many connections other than this geographical tie. Yi Bingshou’s admiration for Su Shi can be found in his poems, calligraphy and even his taste. To be specific, Yi Bingshou and Su Shi both considered the moral integrity of a calligrapher to be more important than refinement of calligraphic skill. Furthermore, they both wrote extensively about art collecting and made a distinction between highly ornate objects and genuine art, in this context, meaning primarily calligraphy and painting. This section explores how Yi Bingshou’s

⁹ Ronald Egan, *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought And Pursuits In Northern Song Dynasty China*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006, 13

admiration for Su Shi shaped his perspective on calligraphy and art collecting, and most importantly, his understanding of what it meant to be a responsible man of letters in troubled times.

As Ronald Egan pointed out, Su Shi asserted in many colophons that brushwork reflects the virtue of the calligrapher, and that the calligraphy of a virtuous man deserves to be valued even if his brushwork is not exceptionally good.¹⁰ This reflects a belief, shared by the Song dynasty intellectuals, that the moral integrity of the calligrapher was an intrinsic aspect of his calligraphy. It is evident that Su Shi was thinking in terms of intrinsic value over superficial beauty and elegance. This is his poetic reflections on the matter:

In calligraphy, Duling valued only the thin and taut,
His view is an unfair one I [Su Shi] do not accept,
Short, tall, fleshy, thin - each has its appeal,
Jade Bracelet and flying swallow who could dislike either of them.¹¹

Su Shi firmly believed regardless the calligraphic style, readers will love these scripts if the calligrapher is virtuous and honest. One of Yi Bingshou's poems specifically responded to Su Shi's claim about the intrinsic value of calligraphy:

Why do I have to discuss the quality of the calligraphy from the
standpoint of its artistic values? Justice lies between the people and
heaven, and it is not bounded by any restrictions.¹²

Su Shi and Yi Bingshou shared a common belief about the probity of a calligrapher is much more important than forms and styles of scripts. The poem is directly referring to Su Shi, and this third and fourth lines: "Why do I have to discuss the quality of the calligraphy from the

¹⁰ Ronald Egan, *Word, image, and deed in the life of Su Shi*, Harvard University Press, 1994, 267

¹¹ Egan, *Word*, 269

¹² Yi Bingshou, *Shu Fa Jing Xuan Ji*, Xi Ling Press, 2013, 133

standpoint of its artistic values? Justice lies between the people and heaven, and it is not bounded by any restrictions” implies that Yi Bingshou was himself an admirer of Su Shi’s moral integrity.

The Taste of the Literati

During the Song dynasty, prominent scholars such as Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi attempted to promote a value system that distinguished the taste of the literati from that of the court and the aristocrats: knowledge was valued over wealth, natural beauty over heavy ornament, crudeness over refined craftsmanship.

The literati tended to despise ostentatious art collectors. One of the major arguments advanced by Egan is that as a literatus Su Shi adopted a humanistic approach to understanding art.¹³ Su Shi was constantly deployed elevated taste in his definition of art. In fact, he invented the term “literati painting”, an art form in which, he claimed, metaphor and erudition should be hidden yet available to the viewers. Refined craftsmanship and ornamentation were looked down upon by those scholars. Su Shi was perhaps even more rigid than Ou Yangxiu in his judgements of taste and styles. Su believed spending large sums of money could mentally corrupt a man. Nearly a thousand years later, Yi Bingshou embraced a similar view:

[Collecting] paintings and calligraphy is a superficial hobby. Overly indulging in these “things” is like indulging in music and sex. Therefore past scholars quit “playing” those “things” that could corrupt their aspiration.[The believed that] Art collectors should be humble and moderate. If one is benevolent, then one may collect these things. Otherwise, one should not be a hypocritical [ostentatious] collector.¹⁴
(Figure 4)

¹³ Ronald Egan, *The Problem of Beauty*, Chapter 4

¹⁴ Yi Bingshou, See Appendix

The text is self-explanatory. Yi Bingshou regarded art as a temptation and thought that collecting art should be very carefully practiced. For he and Su Shi alike: this “elevated” taste meant valuing knowledge and naturalness over ornamentation, crudeness over craftsmanship.¹⁵

There is an object in Yi Bingshou’s own collection that reflects this kind of bias. An inscribed limestone scholar's rock (Figure 5.0) that he signed and named “Descending Goose Peak” by him. In order to understand why he valued this plain black rock, it is necessary once again to look back to Su Shi.

Su Shi hated “things” (wu 物) but loved rocks. (Egan referred to “things” as commodities.) His affection for rocks, no doubt, based on those negligible materialist worth.¹⁶ Martin Powers has argued that Su Shi must have valued these objects because he considered them to be “natural” - ziran and that these rocks, for Su Shi, were seen as imaginary landscape.¹⁷ Morris argues the “mini world of the garden.”¹⁸ Put simply, both scholars that recognized these Song intellectuals valued the connotations of the rock and their natural appearance as primary pleasure.

¹⁵ Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang*, 1

¹⁶ Egan, *The Problem of Beauty*, 179

¹⁷ Martin Powers, *Garden Rocks, Fractals and Freedom: Tao Yuanming Comes Home*,” *Oriental Art*, XLIV, no 1, 1998, pp 33,34

¹⁸ Edwin Morris, *The Gardens of China*, Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication, 82



Figure 5.1 Details of “Descending Goose Peak,”

Returning to the analysis of Yi Bingshou’s scholarly rock (Figure 5.0), we can see that he engraved, or asked an engraver to carve, three characters on the surface of the rock reading “Descending Goose Peak,” 落雁峰 (*feng* meaning a natural peak of a mountain). (Figure 5.1) Thus, it is evident that Yi Bingshou, as a cultural successor to Su Shi, was highlighting the landscape connotations of the rock. He surely inherited the same traditional literati ideas that had been endorsed by prominent scholars, like Su Shi.

In order to further illuminate this notion of “natural” rocks, it is useful to compare and contrast the expensive rocks from imperial collections. The imperial collectors showed no interest in amassing small inexpensive rocks, like the one signed by Yi Bingshou. Instead, they mainly collected two types of rocks: expensive jades and gigantic rocks from Lake Tai. Edwin Morris notices the Qing court purchased a significant number of expensive rocks for the emperor’s personal garden, now commonly known as the Beihai Park. These gigantic rocks (Figure 6) originated in the Yangtze delta region and were transported to Beijing at considerable cost. The court was actively collecting jades and commissioning engravers to make them into delicate artworks. The so called “*Jade Miniature Mountain with Figure of Arhat,*” (Figure 7) was carefully selected for quality; the inscription carved in the finest script indicates that

delicate piece was commissioned and designed by the court. It is evident that the emperor and the imperial family favored this kind of object. Yi Bingshou and his friends help such things in contempt.

A Wide Range of Calligraphic Abilities

Yi Bingshou's main sources of artistic inspiration were Han dynasty historical objects. In this section, I will briefly discuss his calligraphic abilities and his preference for using clerical script for purpose of art making. In his later years in Yangzhou, Yi Bingshou mainly focused on developing and producing calligraphy. Before that, he spent most of his life studying, teaching, and working as a magistrate. As stated earlier, he was required to use the rigorous and delimiting *guange* script. One of his essays from this period (Figure 8) makes clear that he used a small brush to write delicate characters. And that he was in full command of the official style.

Although Yi Bingshou is best known today for his stele calligraphy, he was also able to write in canonical styles, especially the traditional running script. *Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion* 兰亭序 (Figure 9) is the most celebrated work of the great calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361), whose running script is considered to be the best ever written and this is the style Tang calligraphers intended to revive. From Yi Bingshou's version of the same text. (Figure 10) One can conclude that Yi Bingshou was able perfectly to execute the canonical style. This indicates that he not only had a wide range of calligraphic styles at his command. From the quality of the calligraphy, it is apparent that he spent a considerable time practicing the canon. But like other stele school calligraphers, he also appreciated insignificant calligraphers¹⁹ — the same ones who, because of their status as clerks,

¹⁹ For clarification, sometimes these “insignificant calligraphers” just happened to be clerks who know how to read and write, so it is debatable if they should even be called calligraphers

were ignored by the traditional school. Yi Bingshou loved stele scripts that had been traditionally considered to be poorly executed. In fact, his clerical script and running scripts exemplify the highpoint of the stele school. As a representative of the stele school, Yi Bingshou used the inspiration gained from practicing Han stele and bronze works to design inscriptions on tombstones and to write his own diary. The next section will consider these works.

Sources of Calligraphic Inspiration: Han Stele

In previous sections, I have demonstrated that a significant number of traditional school calligraphic works were collected by the emperor, which resulted to turn to even earlier periods for calligraphic inspirations. In this section, I will briefly discuss how Yi Bingshou's clerical script was inspired by ancient steles and how he integrated that style into his own calligraphy.

The Zhangqian stele 張遷碑

Yi Bingshou used the Zhangqian stele as a mode. (Figure 11.1) Working from rubbings of the Han dynasty (original 186 BE, excavated during the Ming dynasty) (Figure 11.0), he was dealing clerical scripts that are skewed and uneven in size – suggesting that the work was neither made by a professional calligrapher nor by a good engraver. It was made to commemorate Zhangqian's journey to the West. According to the inscription, it was commissioned by Wei Meng and carved by Sun Xing, low ranking clerks, both of whom were friends of Zhangqian.

Yi Bingshou, however, very much appreciated the stele that he considered its poor execution, its artlessness, as a source of inspiration. Yi Bingshou, in other words, sought to appropriate the “objectionable” qualities of the Zhangqian stele, and reconfigure them to create

a script with which he could address his own historical moment. Yi Bingshou must have understood the text and its account of historical figures. So by copying this stele he not only demonstrated his historical erudition but also his appreciation of a crude calligraphic style that would never enjoy the favor of the court. He repeatedly copied the inscription on the stele, trying to modify the quality with his own creativity. The reason I use the word “creativity” is that in the traditional field of calligraphy, “creativity” has negative connotations. The best calligrapher is always the one who is able to revive the calligraphy from the ancient sage Wang Xizhi. But after the rise of the stele school, this ideal gradually changed and critics started to value the artist’s creativity.



(Figure 11.2)s Detail of the character“上”, Yi’s version(Left); Original Zhangqian stele(Right)

Yi Bingshou used the stele school aesthetic in recreating the Zhangqian stele, which was created by an amateur. In one of his versions of the stele (Figure 11.1), he improved upon the characters. For example, he executed in what is thought to be the more legible, the vertical stroke of the character “上” meaning “up”. On the original stele that same character it is skewed to the left, but in Yi Bingshou’s copy it is totally upright. In this way, Yi effectively “cleaned up” the writing of the original to make it more readable for the people, who presumably would have understand the calligrapher’s enthusiasm for a script that was spontaneously antient and “artless.”



(Figure 11.3) Details of the character“聲”, Yi’s version(Left); Original Zhangqian stele(Right)

He also shifted the usual orientation of the character meaning “sound” 聲. Conventionally “耳,” part of the character, is placed underneath “声爻”, the other part of the character. Yi Bingshou placed “耳” underneath “声”, to the left of the character “爻.” This modification is rare in the traditional school of calligraphy, but Yi Bingshou was willing to make such artistic choices, it is an intentional archaizing of a modern character.



(Figure 11.4) Details of the character“析”, Yi’s version(Left); Original Zhangqian stele(Right)

Third, he joined characters that are disconnected in the original stele, making the composition more compact. For example, in the character meaning “analysis,” xi 析 (析), there is too much space between the “木” and “片,” as if they are falling apart. A professional calligrapher would not be this sloppy. Yi Bingshou has closed the gaps and made the character more legible. This raises the question of why, during Yi Bingshou’s generation, calligraphers started to embrace this kind of “poorly executed” work, and why the new versions of them came to be widely accepted by later generations of critics. Did the later generations of art critics still

consider this sort of styles as “poorly executed”? Or did they recognize them as archaization, is one who like Yi Bingshou, like the erudition or the resurrection?

The Hengfang stele 衡方碑

Another important piece is the re-creation of the Hengfang stele. Yi Bingshou loved the Hengfang stele (Figure 12.1) and mentioned it once in a poem calling it our generations’ model.”²⁰ He took an additional step by recreating the stele in this own hand (Figure 12.0). The reason I recognize this piece as a big step forward is that Yi Bingshou made many bold changes to the original script. This Hengfang stele was executed by a better engraver or calligrapher than the creation of the Zhangqian stele. (Figure 12.0) One can see that this stele consists of characters of unified size, and proper spacing, resulting in a work that was already easily legible.

Stylistically speaking, the re-creation of the stele revealed three particular emphases: the use of non-standard characters (*yitizi*), the closely juxtaposed (but different) characters, and the use of dry ink.

²⁰ Yi Bingshou, *Liu Chun Cao Tang, vol.1* , 70



Figure 12.2 Details of the character“ 𠃉”, Yi’s version(Left); Original Hengfang stele(Right)

Where non-standard character are concerned, Yi Bingshou made several variations from the original text. For example, the character “以” is written as “𠃉” on the stele; Yi used “𠃉.” These characters are called non-standard characters (*yitizi*), meaning that they convey the same meaning through different forms. Scholar Bai considered to be a “playful” variation that is practiced by literati. He traced the origin of this unusual phenomenon to the early seventeenth century. Scholars during the Ming dynasty were interested in the strange characters that appeared on ancient steles, and they adopted some that had been abandoned for more than a thousand years. After the fall of the Ming dynasty, The Qing scholars continued to use these characters and sometimes in literary rebuses, the objective would have been to show the old characters to friends who presumed untangle the reference and share in the erudition. Therefore, it is the evidence that Yi Bingshou was using this kind of characters to evoke readers’ curiosity and to establish intellectual lineages.



Figure 12.3 Details of Yi Bingshou's the Hengfang Recreation

As for the closely juxtaposed characters, Yi Bingshou modified the clerical script of the Hengfang stele so that some strokes are elongated to the point that they nearly touch the other characters. For example, the horizontal strokes of the character “兼” are extended to the right of the grid and two strokes from the character “少” extended to the left of the grid. As a result, these strokes are stacked on top of each other. It is interesting to see how the calligrapher was able to control the length of the strokes and establish a kind of intimacy between characters. Similarly, the character “季” and “濡 (儒)”, the horizontal strokes “季” almost touch “氵.” Large brushes are relatively difficult to control, and the calligrapher has anticipated the use of large characters would lead to overly dense compositions on the hanging scrolls, and he was able to avoid this problem by making the strokes intertwined yet not connected.



Figure 12.4 Details of Yi Bingshou's Hengfang Recreation

Yi Bingshou's was specially interested in dry ink because it could help him to control the gradations of the blackness by controlling the saturation of the ink brush. Ink is one of the important parts of a calligraphic work, and a calligrapher or an artist is able to control the gradient of the blackness by controlling the saturation of the ink brush. The Hengfang stele re-creation exhibit the dry effects. For example, the character “脩” has several strokes that seem to have been done with an especially dry brush. It is crucial to note that writing calligraphy is a long process; each strokes requires great attention and patience. Before applying the next stroke, the calligrapher must decide whether to dip the ink again. Writing in dry ink was a studied technique . Many of the Song and Ming scholars recognized that one of the major characteristics of ancient stelae were that sometimes were damaged and partially eroded. These effects were thought to be “natural.” And calligraphers began to use dry ink effect to imitate the damage and erosion of an aged stele. This particular effect attested once again the appreciation of the “naturalness”. Thus the core aesthetic of a stele clerical script is not the “extraordinary” techniques of past calligraphers far from it. Rather it is the naturalness of the script reveal both through age and through relative naivete of the calligrapher.

Application of the Clerical Script

Su Shi's memorial text to his beloved concubine Wang Zhaoyun (1062-1096) was considered a literary masterpiece in the eighteenth century. When Yi Bingshou was the magistrate of Huizhou, he reconstructed the tomb of Wang Zhaoyun and decided to use his calligraphic style to recreate Su Shi's text. Both Su Shi and Yi Bingshou's calligraphy was carved on a stele and placed near Wang Zhaoyun's tomb. (Figure 13.0 and Figure 13.1)²¹ Su Shi's typical running script focuses on the thin and elegant strokes. Figure 13.1 is Yi Bingshou's imitation of the text. Someone with no prior knowledge of calligraphy will recognize that there is a significant stylistic difference between the two. The traditional school emphasized an elegant way of writing, a balance between thin and thick strokes, and swiftness of execution. Yi Bingshou's version apparently adopted some of the calligraphic inspiration he borrowed from the Han stele. He used non-standard characters, a uniform thickness of strokes, and highlighted the naïveté of the clerical script.



Figure 13.2 Su Shi's “粗” Yi Bingshou's “麤”

Su Shi's “以” Yi Bingshou's “𠃉”

For example, he wrote “粗” as “麤”, and “以” as “𠃉.” Using these alternative ways of writing characters on a public stele is especially significant, because Yi Bingshou wanted

²¹ Liu Qijin, a contemporary scholar, collected all the characters from Su Shi's surviving works in 1991, and assembled them to reconstruct what Su Shi's text might have looked like in his own hand, so Figure 13.0 is an image of the stele in Su Shi's imagined hand. Even though the 20th century reconstruction is an only assembly of Su Shi's characters, it provides a close approximation of how Su Shi's original writing likely would have appeared.

ordinary people to be able to read the text. But he also made it clear to scholars in his circle that he himself favored this unorthodox choice. Thus, The solution has thus to make moderate use of *yitizi* in this particular stele, thereby pointing to his appreciation of unconventional while ensuring the text is readable.

As I mentioned above, the most significant differences between the traditional school and the stele school was fully exemplified in this text. To compare Su Shi's original writing was reconstructed in 1991, the scholar selected the calligraphers' most typical characters that were used by him. It is easy to see the different forms, the traditional school underscored the free brush movements, open and angular characters structures, a balance between thin and thick strokes, very fine ligatures between strokes, and sharp hooks at the bottom ends of the thick vertical strokes.²² Yi Bingshou's work characterized standardized thickness, and hooks are mostly rounded not sharp, One of Yi Bingshou's poems reveals his artistic intention concerning past calligraphy:

The traditional ink [scripts] are often misleading,
I am such an unconstrained person.
We all know Su Shi resurrected the Jin dynasty calligraphic style,
How have [I] betrayed Su Shi?²³

Yi is interested here in Su Shi's resurrection of the Jin dynasty calligraphic styles, yet he was reluctant to follow Su Shi's formal approach. So, why would Yi Bingshou suggest in the poem that Shi, suggest in the poem that the traditional scripts were often misleading?

During the Song Dynasty, scholars including Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi sought to resurrected calligraphic styles from the previous dynasties. They wrote extensively about the

²² Stephen Little, *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Volv 74, 379

²³ Yi Bingshou, *Colophon on the Four Song Period Masters of Calligraphy* 题宋四家, author's translation, Figure 17

history of calligraphy, and expressed great enthusiasm for the talents of their predecessors. In contrast, Yi Bingshou's calligraphy and text do not show any evidence that he felt obligated to resurrect the formal style of his calligraphic predecessors. Was it because he was less skillful from them? Or certainly not, the calligraphic ideals of Yi Bingshou's generation had been reconfigure around different values.

Sources of Calligraphic Inspiration: Bronze works

Yi Bingshou was also interested seal script. For the calligrapher, inscriptions on bronze works were another important source of calligraphic inspiration. Fu Shen, the prominent scholar of calligraphy, also recognized that Yi Bingshou's use of round stroke was an "ancient approach" derived from the seal script and inscriptions from bronze works, emphasize round edges instead of sharp edges.²⁴

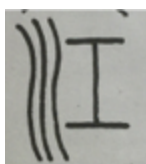
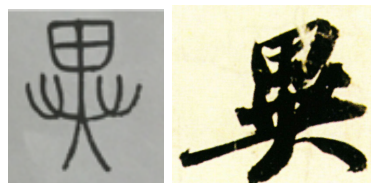


Figure (14.1) Detail of the character "river"

In one of Yi's seal script characters, (Figure 14.0), he used thin strokes were entirely different from the ones he had learned from stele. Unlike the thick, bold lines of conventional clerical scripts, this work emphasized fine curved, and elongated strokes, while still retaining the round edges and perfect symmetry that characterized the seal style. For example, in the character "江" (Figure 14.1) Yi Bingshou wrote a perfectly "工" at the right, which is balanced

²⁴ Shen Fu. *Traces of the Brush: Studies In Chinese Calligraphy*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Art Gallery, 1977, 59

by three curving lines, deployed to fashion the “ 巽 ”. These subtle variations revealed his understanding of the ancient calligraphy as well as his interest in applying these characteristics to art making.



(Figure 14.2) Yi Bingshou’s “巽” Su Shi’s running script Character“巽”

Symmetry is not a feature of traditional school calligraphy. Running scripts emphasized modulated lines in which the orientation of the character is unbalanced or tilted. The seal script consists of thin, curved, and elongated strokes. For example, Su Shi’s “巽” is executed in modulated strokes that exhibit the pressure applied to the paper by the brush. In contrast Yi Bingshou’s “巽” in seal script appears to be measured and meticulous.



(Figure 14.3) Yi Bingshou’s character “high” (Figure 14.4) Early stone rubbings character “high”

The character “高” meaning “high” in seal script is typically written as figure 14.4, but Yi Bingshou deliberately transformed the upper part of the character into a symmetrical structure. Yi Bingshou was clearly inventing a new archaizing writing that was based on seal scripts.

Application of Seal Script

Yi Bingshou used seal scripts in many of his daily writings. For example, in the diary, (Figure. 15) records Yi Bingshou remembers his teacher Ji Xiaolan, a leading official, giving a Han dynasty ink stone to Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅(1775-1849). The script used in this piece is a clerical script with seal characteristics. He used thin brushes which were typically employ to write non-seal script characters. This piece also shows that seal script he at tempted is is significantly different than his re-creations of clerical script.

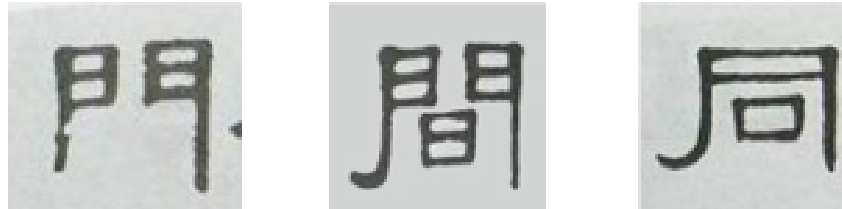


Figure 15.1 Yi Bingshou's “門”, “問”, “同”

The three characters above share the same basic composition “門,” what Yi Bingshou has done here is to intervene into the conventions of clerical script, by making subtle (and not so subtle) changes. He avoids the overly excessive use of the same curly repetition at the left bottom corner in the structure “門”.

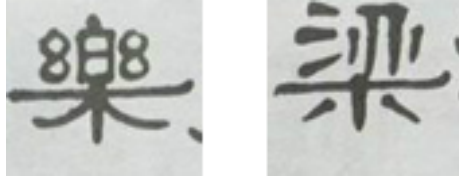


Figure 15.2 Yi Bingshou's “樂” “梁”

He integrate seal script techniques into the horizontal stokes. The character “樂” and “梁” both consist of a “木” structure at the bottom. Yi Bingshou choose to curved the horizontal strokes and to give it a “tail” at the right.

To conclude, imitation, usually translated *lin* 临 or *fang* 仿, was an indispensable to the study of calligraphy in China. In the 1980s and 90s, many scholars believed that calligraphy served principally utilitarian purpose. They neglected the fact that a professional calligrapher, drawing inspiration from stelae, bronze works, and more canonical works, that cleverly referenced historical conventions in order to transmit alternative meaning. Eventually, when the calligraphy felt that his technique was “mature” enough for art making, he then started to formally produce art works. As a result, these observations support the assertion that Yi Bingshou was therefore not only trying to revive scripts that were used during the Han dynasty, he could make the calligraphy itself a communicative form that was only partially reliant upon content also to establish a style of his own invention that cleverly referenced historical conventions in order to transmit alternative meanings.

Political Sabotage

In Chinese, the term “calligrapher” has many connotations. A “calligrapher” is not only an artist, but also a scholar, an intellectual, a poet, and a government official. In order to fully understand Yi Bingshou, it is necessary to read his poems and to study the historical pertaining to his life as an official. In this section, I will unpack one of the crucial events of Yi Bingshou’s life and consider the ways it shaped his writing.

Yi Bingshou made a fan (Figure.16) sometime between 1800 and 1815. He used running script of his own design and offered the fan as a gift to his friend Liang Zhangju 梁章钜 (1775-1849). The title is called the *Colophon on the Four Song Period Masters of Calligraphy*, and it consists of four sub-poems. Each sub-poem conveys critical information about historical references and calligraphy. For the general public, subtle historical references seem obscure. But Liang Zhangju, a prominent Qing intellectual, would definitely have recognized names of past politicians, and their respective histories. In order to unpack both the theme and the social implications of the work, it is essential to analyze these historical references. The second sub poem has the most explicit in this regard:

The honest and outspoken yet isolated official during the *Yuanyou* period wrote the *Cold Food Festival Poem*. When I imitate the calligraphy, it often reminds me of the time when I was prohibited to write. Why do I have to discuss the quality of the calligraphy from the standpoint of its artistic values? Justice lies between the people and heaven, and it is not bounded by any restrictions.²⁵

During the Yuanyou 元祐 Era (1086 to 1094), during which the government of the Song dynasty suppressed dissent and free speech, which in turn resulted in severe political sabotage.

The partisan dispute of Yuanyou 元祐/新舊黨爭 was initiated by the statesman Wang Anshi 王

²⁵ Yi Bingshou, *Colophon on the Four Song Period Masters of Calligraphy*, Yi Bingshou’s Calligraphic Collection, Ink on Paper, 133

安石 (1021-1086), whose goal was nothing less than the complete reform of Chinese society. My primary interest here is not to evaluate the feasibility of this reform; rather, I want to emphasize its consequences. As a result of the ensuing conflict, government officials were divided into two camps: the Conservative party and the New party. The leaders of both parties debated extensively about which policies will serve the common good.

This discussion did not end with a compromise. Instead, it led to the most severe purge of the otherwise liberal Song dynasty. When the leader of the new party, Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), and then Wang Anshi himself both passed away, the purge reached its apex: the New party ruthlessly executed their opponents. One of the leaders of the New party, Cai Jin 蔡京 (1047-1126) drafted a blacklist of conservative party members, identifying them as *partisans of evil* 元祐姦黨 and prohibiting their successors to take the civil service exam. This infamous black list was made into a stele and was widely reproduced and disseminated nationwide.²⁶ The influence of this blacklist continued to have an impact well after the *Yuanyou* era because students use this stele as a tool to learn calligraphic model. However, when later Song historians reevaluated the purge, they recognize Cai Jin and the New party as corrupt, members of the Conservative party as innocent victims. Generations of scholars thus regarded the blacklist as evidence of speech suppression, and *Yuanyou* became byword for political sabotage.

Yi Bingshou's poem does not explicitly name "The honest and outspoken official." But it does mention the "Cold Food Festival Poem" 寒食詩. By mentioning the poem, Yi Bingshou indirectly refers to its author: Su Shi, a name on the *Yuanyou* blacklist, who we accordingly take to be the official. Almost all of Su's poems recount his miserable experience in exile, where he

²⁶ Cai Jing, A Blacklist of Conservative Party Members, 元祐黨籍碑

languished for years because he wanted to protect the middle and lower income taxpayer from being overly taxed. Qing scholars often regarded Su Shi as a quintessential victim of speech suppression.

The second line addresses Yi Bingshou's attempt to imitate Su Shi's poem and calligraphy. Imitation was seen at the time as a means of spiritual synchronization with the original calligrapher. So in this case, the subjects of the second line of the poem are both Yi Bingshou and Su Shi. When Su Shi was forced into exile, he expressed disappointment for having lost his position at court. He represented this sentiment in the *Cold Food Festival Poem* by invoking withering flowers and cold rains. Yi Bingshou, in turn, expressed his emotion by imitating Su Shi's poem. The third line of the poem indicates that the *Cold Food Festival Poem* has long been regarded as an outstanding example of running script calligraphic style, even though its message has been overlooked. The final lines of Yi Bingshou's poem seem to correct this oversight by suggesting that content of *the Cold Food Festival Poem* is even more powerful than its delicate calligraphy. Yi asserts that, as I already pointed, Justice for the honest and outspoken official lay between the people and heaven.²⁷

Several critical questions emerge from reading this poem. Why did Yi Bingshou refer to an episode of political sabotage that happened nearly seven hundred years earlier? What kinds of attitudes are readable in the last line of the poem.

One part of the *Draft History of Qing*,²⁸ the Qing government official history, recounts an episode of Yi Bingshou's life as a magistrate. He faced his biggest crisis in November 1802.

²⁷ Heaven in this context can be interpreted as the "sky," and the heavens not "heaven" in a religious sense, or the omnipotence the emperor.

²⁸ *Draft History of Qing*, vol. 265, Yi Bingshou's Zhuan 《列傳二百六十五》

It turned into a nightmare that he would remember for the rest of his life. When Chen Yaben 陳亞本 incited a riot, Yi Bingshou, the local magistrate at the time, suppressed the riot with the help of seventy soldiers, but without the consent of his superior military commander Sun Quanmou 提督孫全某. Yi Bingshou overstepped his boundaries as local magistrate, giving military advice to the military commander. Soon there after, Chen's successor, Chen Lanji 陳爛屐, started another riot in Boluo 博羅, seeking revenge on the government's response to the last riot. The rebels gathered more men this time and started to loot towns in Yi Bingshou's jurisdiction. The magistrate wanted to protect his citizens and sent a request to Sun Quanmou for reinforcements for the army in order to quickly end the rebellion, Sun refused. Yi Bingshou was enraged and he argued with his superior. Even though Sun Quanmou eventually sent three hundred men to help the magistrate, Yi Bingshou failed to stop the rebellion and was therefore discharged. Some of the soldiers, however, insisted that he stay with the troops, so Sun Quanmou reluctantly restored Yi Bingshou to his position. But the conflict was not over.

Yi Bingshou repeatedly urged the military commander to send more troops after some of the soldiers joined the rebellion. But Sun Quanmou was fed up with Yi Bingshou's impertinence, so he along with and the governor of Guangdong and Guangxi Jiqing 兩廣總督吉慶, accused Yi Bingshou of dereliction of duty and failure to crush the rebellion.

The turning point of this rebellion is recorded in the military report written from the provincial governor Hu Tuli 瑚圖礼. Chen, the rebel, killed some of his comrades and eventually losing the faith of his soldiers. (Figure 2)²⁹ And the government in turn demanded another reinforcement and to eradicate the remaining rebel forces. Hu Tuli was careful to report

²⁹ Hutu Li, *Military report in Boluo Incident*, Grand Council database , See Figure 2

that both of Yi's superior in this events misbehaved: Jiqing panicked during the rebellion; and Sun Quanmou attempted to enlist rebels in the government's military rather than pressing charges on them. This report is confirmed in the chapter about Jiqing in the *Draft History of Qing*.

The rebellion in 1802 was apparently full of ups and downs, but Yi Bingshou was still found guilty for dereliction of duty and failure to crush the rebellion. Wo Bushi, the new governor who replaced Jiqing visited Huizhou where thousands of citizens petitioned for Yi Bingshou's exoneration.³⁰ They claimed that Yi Bingshou was innocent. The new governor reported this unusual phenomenon to Jiaqing 嘉庆, the emperor, who pardoned Yi Bingshou and made him the magistrate of Yangzhou. I believe this is the reason that Yi Bingshou do that last line. "Justice for the solitary official lies between the people and heaven, and it is not bounded by any restrictions 公是天人不受羈 ”

The word "justice 公" in Chinese means "public," which suggest the determination of Su Shi's innocent involved the consent of the people. The word "heaven 天" in Chinese, as I mentioned above, refers to "sky", as well as the preeminence of the emperor; But suggest Yi's innocent, like Su Shi's, innocent, was determined by the public consent.³¹ Thus when Yi Bingshou wrote his poem, he was likely referring to his own discharged and reinstatement since

³⁰ The *Draft History of Qing* does not include an alternative case when thousands of citizens petitioned for someone's exoneration, thus Yi Bingshou's incident was the sole case.

³¹ Firstly, they are both victims of a political sabotage in which Yi Bingshou was blamed by his superior and Su Shi was suppressed by the New Party. Second, the people, the citizen loved both of him. When Su Shi during the Yuanyou purge, regained endorsement from Fang Zirong 方子容, the local procurator 太守 in Huizhou. He also received recognition for his career as a righteous intellectual. Most importantly remembered by the later historians. Scogin specifically recorded Su Shi's contribution in local levels, For example, he established the earliest form of orphanage, clinic.# Yi Bingshou was also favored by his citizens in his jurisdiction. He restored the Fenghu academy in Huizhou and built several food stations after the flood of Yangzhou in 1805.

his reinstatement was enacted by the emperor in response to the public. The recipient of this fan, the intellectual Liang Zhangju, would have no doubt understood these references.

The official history apparently favors Yi Bingshou, and faults his superiors. But the truth might not be so simple. Yi's dismissal was devastating to his family. Yi Bingshou's father, Yi Chaodong 伊朝棟, sent a report in 1806, in which he accused the military governor Sun of working with the enemy and refusing to deploy his army. The emperor and the military elite were skeptical of these claims, because, first of all, they rightfully assumed Yi Bingshou's father was writing on his son's behalf, and secondly because it seems illogical for the military governor not to deploy his army to put down the rebellion. They accordingly urged Wo Bushi the new governor, confirm Yi Bingshou's "misconduct," despite Yi Bingshou's father entreaties. The word choices in this record indicate that the charge against Yi, dereliction of duty, amounted to treason, but Wo Bushi corroborating his father claim, reported back to the emperor that Yi Bingshou made several formal request for reinforcement, but was rejected each time by the military governor.³²

Although the court accused Yi Bingshou's father of distorting the facts, it did not press charges. The case was no doubt mentally devastating for a 78-years-old man who saw that his son was about to be exiled.³³ In any case, the difficulties thus experienced may very well have led Yi Bingshou to warn people, in his later calligraphy, to employ "cautious speech."

When Emperor Jiaqing reflected on this incident in 1833, 30 years after the rebellion, he remarked that this case involved a series of bureaucratic concealments and considerable corruption.³⁴ He not only denounced Jiqing's and Hu Tuli's dereliction of duty, as one would

³² Emperor Jiaqing's period Archives, see Appendix II

³³ Yi Chaodong died in one year after this incident.

³⁴ Emperor Jiaqing's period Archives, see Appendix II

expected, but also he condemned Yi Bingshou for not reporting his superior's crime to the central government. Yi Bingshou was fortunate be pardoned and exonerated in 1807 since he had not been entirely blameless.

In addition, he composed several poems to illustrate his disappointment at Huizhou: “It breaks my heart to see this place where forthright honesty and moral rectitude died; I submitted my frank and beneficial proposals [at Huizhou]... My aim was to serve the emperor, but all I'm left with are tears!”³⁵ Another poem is more specific: “Every time I return to Huizhou, I can't bear to look back. Some folks from Huizhou came to visit me yesterday, and said they missed me as they would miss their mothers. I am not making this up. Then they addressed me “father, would that you would always exhort us to speak in the public interest.”³⁶ The tone of both poems highlights his disappointment. Therefore, Yi Bingshou felt impacted by the series of events that happened in Huizhou.

I am inclined to believe that this event was a turning point in Yi Bingshou's life. He fought in a local rebellion, failed to suppress the enemy, offended his superior, was discharged from his post, and finally pardoned by the emperor. After all of this, it is not surprising that he would start to produce calligraphy and focus on themes such as speech suppression and cautious speech.

³⁵ Yi Bingshou, *Liu Chun Cao Tang*, vol.2, 21

³⁶ Yi Bingshou, *Liu Chun Cao Tang*, vol.2, 29

Works with Speech Suppression Themes

Yi Bingshou wrote and edited the *Liu Chun Cao Tang* poem collection 留春草堂詩鈔 near the end of his life. In several of his poems describe episodes of political sabotage suppression of speech, for example *The Nostalgia to the Past* 懷古四首. The first of the subpoems addresses a prominent figure of the Han dynasty:

There was a young man from Luoyang whose talent was recognized by the Emperor. The record says that he could work well with the ministers from *Chu*. He was an exceptional prodigy! When he sent his advice to the court, his policy documents were neglected, despite his tears and entreaties. In the end, how should his advice become policy with two noblemen close to the throne blocking it? ³⁷

The protagonist, Jiayi 賈誼 was a talented man who was preventing from sending his proposal unable to send his proposals to the higher court because of the interference of the “Jiangguan 絳灌”. “絳灌” here specifically refers to two noblemen of the Han dynasty: Zhoubo and Guanyin. Because these two figures, unjustly stand between the protagonist and the emperor, it seems likely that Yi Bingshou is referring to himself and his difficulties with Sun Quanmou and Jiqing.

Political sabotage is a vague term that usually points to speech suppression or power struggle. So a poem address the theme of political sabotage, we have to wonder whether the poet is actually addressing about his own freedom of speech. It may help to explain why Yi Bingshou wrote several poems about the concept of “cautious speech.” He even formalized this concept as a family motto so his descendants would remember it.

³⁷ Yi Bingshou, *Liu Chun Cao Tang*, vol.1 , 29

“Cautious Speech” and Outspokenness

Some of Yi Bingshou’s assertions and teachings are contradictory. There is sufficient evidence to show that he was outspoken yet cautious in his speech and writing. What inferences can be drawn from these “cautious speech” mottos?

In the *Draft History of Qing* account of 1805 rebellion, Yi Bingshou’s outspokenness is referred to three times within a short text.³⁸ Consider Yi Bingshou’s choice of words as he argues with Sun; 1) if we delay the reinforcement, the people will suffer more!” 2) If we recklessly send troops and are outnumbered, everything will be too late!”³⁹ His blunt attitude was not lost on his superiors, according to the *Draft History of Qing*, nor was the resentment 憤懣 he expressed at their apparent incompetence.

On the other hand, When Yi Bingshou later wrote mottos about “cautious speech,” he would go so far as to make calligraphic works for public display. The concept of “cautious speaking” can be traced in Confucius *Analecets*, but various sources show that it was not favored by many intellectuals. Su Shi was an outspoken figure even after he was exiled during the *Yuanyou* purge. He famously said of outspokenness:

"Words arise in the heart and erupt into the mouth. If you spit them out you might offend someone, but if you swallow them you will surely offend yourself. I've always thought it better to offend others, and so I have always spat them out."⁴⁰

Yi Bingshou knew and admired this text and one point in his life, and he was himself equally outspoken. In the aftermath of the 1806 rebellion and his exoneration by the emperor, however, his tone would change:

³⁸ *Draft History of Qing*, vol. 265, Yi Bingshou’s *Zhuan* 《列傳二百六十五》”

³⁹ *Draft History of Qing*, vol 265

⁴⁰ Su Shi, *Si Tang Ji* 思堂记

Whenever [I] say something inappropriate, I end up regretting it.
The principle of “speaking cautiously” not only applies to public
spaces, but also private spaces.⁴¹ (Figure 17)

In this passage Yi Bingshou pauses to reflect after making an inappropriate statement. The theme of “cautious speech” 謹言 is thereby articulated.

The same is true of a tablet that reads: “reflect on yourself and speak cautiously” 省躬慎言” (Figure 18) Yi Bingshou offered this tablet as a gift for an elder called Xiong at his seventieth birthday, and it was produced in 1811. This piece of writing is obviously formal since he listed all his governmental titles in this tablet on the right, and he uses standard running script instead of his signature clerical script.

There are two possible explanations for his commitment to “cautious speech”: fear of demotion or deliberate irony. The *Reflect on Yourself and Speak Cautiously* tablet consists of four big characters, decorated in gold, and written in the standard “official” running script, which suggests a double measure of respect--in terms of both meaning and style. One possible explanation is that Yi Bingshou was indeed attempting to flatter an elder in an especially dignified manner. On the other hand, it is possible that the heavy-handed obsequiousness in play here indicates the possibility that Yi Bingshou is speaking ironically (and, in effect, disrespectfully). The instability of meaning is produced to a certain extent by the contradictory nature, when considered together, of all his poems and teachings. It may be true that he admired Su Shi and his outspokenness early in his career, and that he would become more respectful after having been exonerated by the emperor in 1806. We do not, however, know when these poems were written. Which points to the other possibility, which is that his “outspoken” and his

⁴¹ Yi Bingshou, *Yi Bingshou Calligraphic Collection*, Xi Ling, 54 Note: The date of this specific writing cannot be traced, but it is very likely that Yi Bingshou wrote this after having some arguments within the household.

“cautious” texts were chronologically interspersed during his lifetime. This would suggest that every time he promoted the concept of “cautious speech” he actually meant the opposite, an ironic form of communication that would have been recognized by his fellow intellectuals.

Regardless of the unanswerable question about meaning and intent, we are dealing in Yi Bingshou with a calligrapher who like Su Shi before him understood a calligrapher is more than a craftsman and clerk. In this following undated poem he clearly exhort justice and outspokenness:

Even though I left [this place], how could I forget [the event]. I remember everyone I have met here and everything I have encountered. This event [probably Chen’s rebellion] is about Justice! It is not enough to limit these feelings in publications, Only Justice knows my true feelings, and only Justice can bear my rage.⁴²

According to Yi Bingshou and Su Shi’s definition. A true calligrapher must be an intellectual, a virtuous man who were capable of writing beautiful calligraphies. And yes, Yi is definitely a true calligrapher.

⁴² Yi Bingshou, *Liu Chun Cao Tang*, vol.2, 29

Conclusion

A poet might refine his rhetoric more than a thousand times to make his poem perfect. Similarly, a calligrapher might practice his brushstrokes for more than a thousand times to make his calligraphy idiosyncratic. My discussion of Yi Bingshou and his calligraphy makes clear that Qing dynasty calligraphers had a distinct stylistic and ideological differences compared to Tang and Song calligraphers.

I have argued four basic points in this essay. First, that the imperial collection (and other external circumstances) shaped the broader calligraphic context in which Yi Bingshou worked. Second, that there were tangible connections between the aesthetic taste and beliefs of Yi Bingshou and Su Shi. Third, that Yi Bingshou's experiments in seal script and clerical script were based on his adaptation of ancient styles, which allowed him to communicate in different formal "voices" in his personal and public projects. Finally, through close analyses of primary resources and of Yi Bingshou's political situation, I offered an explanation as to why he composed calligraphy and poems on the themes of speech suppression and cautious speaking.

There are multiple limitations of my research. First, I have not had the chance to see Yi Bingshou's work in person, and most of the images of the calligraphy come from the *Yi Bingshou's Calligraphy Collection* published by Xiling Press in Hangzhou. Second, Yi Bingshou often did not date his his calligraphy, which makes it almost impossible to confirm whether the poems are referencing specific events in his life. Therefore, I assume that Yi Bingshou wrote those speech suppression poems after he experienced a series of political

setbacks. Even so, I hope I have offered useful insights into Yi Bingshou's life and work, while also rehearsing new methodological directions for the history of Chinese calligraphy.

Appendix I
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Appendix II

Author's Classical Chinese Translations

Draft History of Qing, Vol 265 《列傳二百六十五》

伊秉綬，字墨卿，福建寧化人。乾隆五十四年進士，授刑部主事，遷員外郎。嘉慶三年，出為廣東惠州知府，問民疾苦，裁汰陋規，行法不避豪右，故練刑名，大吏屢以重獄委之，多所矜恤。

[Yi Bingshou] inquired about the suffering of the people and eliminated excessive and unfair regulations. In applying the law, he did not spare powerful families and demonstrated thorough knowledge of the statute. The senior clerks often tried to pass heavy punishments on people, but in many cases Yi Bingshou, the magistrate, enacted lenient sentences.

陸豐巨猾肆劫勒贖，秉綬設方略，縛其渠七人戮之。六年，歸善陳亞本將為亂，提督孫全謀不發兵，秉綬乃遣役七十餘人夜搗其巢，擒亞本，餘黨竄入羊矢坑。未幾，博羅陳爛屐起事，請兵，提督復沮之。秉綬爭曰：「發兵愈遲，民之傷殘愈甚。」提督不得已，予三百人。秉綬復曰：「偵虛實，則三四人足矣。如用兵，以寡敵眾，徒僨事耳。」提督不聽。

“The best move is to send three or four men to scout the enemy. If we recklessly send troops and are outnumbered, everything will be too late!” The Military Commander ignored him.

令游擊鄭文照率三百人往，子身跳歸，亂遂成。秉綬適以他事罷議去官，士民翕留軍營。時提督既擁兵不前，其標兵卓亞五、朱得貴均通賊縱掠，為偽渠帥。秉綬憤懣，請兵益力，逢總督吉慶之怒，復以失察教匪，dereliction of duty 論戍。會新總督倭什布至惠州，士民數千人訴秉綬冤，上聞，特免其罪，捐復原官，發南河，授揚州知府。

Yi Bingshou's Calligraphy Collection, 伊秉綬書法精品選

元祐孤忠寒食詩，臨書常感禁書時，何須肥瘦論工拙，公是天人不受羈 Page 133
The honest and outspoken yet isolated official during the *Yuanyou* period wrote the “cold food festival poem”. When I imitate the calligraphy, it often reminds me of the time when I was prohibited to write. Why do I have to discuss the quality of the calligraphy from the standpoint of its artistic values? Justice lies between the people and heaven, and it is not bounded by any restrictions.

一語妄發即有悔，謹言不特大庭，閨合中無可亂發之言 Page 54
Whenever [I] say something inappropriate, I end up regretting it. The principle of “speaking cautiously” not only applies to public spaces, but also private spaces.

書畫清虛之好，溺焉亦與聲色同，故先儒戒玩物喪志，收藏則懷苟完苟美只見，有善則存， Page 138

[Collecting] paintings and calligraphies are superficial hobbies. Overly indulge in these “things” is like indulging in music and sex. Therefore past scholars quit “playing” these “things” that could corrupt one’s aspiration. Art collector should be humble and moderate. If one is benevolent, then one may collect these things. Otherwise, do not be a hypocritical [ostentatious] collector.

Yi Bingshou, Liu Chun Cao Tang 留春草堂詩鈔

別離不足道，會合何能忘，人生所交友，寤寐具能詳，此事關道義，不獨在文章，惟公知我真，惟公容我狂念此。

Even though I left [this place], how could I forget [the event]. I remember everyone I have met here and everything I have encountered. This event [Chen’s rebellion] is about Justice! It is not enough to limit these feelings in publications, Only Justice knows my true feelings, and only Justice can bear my rage.

湖水復如何，公亦去之久，我每過惠州，不敢重回首，惠人昨日來，思公只如母，非我實媚、公父老祝我口公平。

“Every time I return to Huizhou, I can’t bear to look back. Some folks from Huizhou came to visit me yesterday, and said they missed me as they would miss their mothers. I am not making this up. Then they addressed me “father, would that you would always exhort us to speak in the public interest.”

忠孝傷心地，文章皓首交... 願言報天子，唯有雙淚拋

It breaks my heart to see this place where forthright honesty and moral rectitude died; I submitted my frank and beneficial proposals [at Huizhou]... My aim was to serve the emperor, but all I’m left with are tears”

洛陽有年少，宣室固會知，傳與楚臣合，才真天下奇，飄零投賦日，痛哭上書時，政體誰能達，仙為絳灌疑。賈長沙

There was a young man from Luoyang whose talent was recognized by the Emperor. The record says that he could work well with the ministers from *Chu*. He was an exceptional prodigy! When he sent his advice to the court, his policy documents were neglected, despite his tears and entreaties. In the end, how should his advice become policy with two noblemen close to the throne blocking it?

General Report on Boluo rebellion

谕内阁、前因倭什布奏、据革职惠州府知府伊秉绶之父原任光禄寺卿伊朝栋呈称、伊子秉绶、因失察会匪、参戎军台、曾于事先叠禀有案、屡求总督提督发兵、皆不见信、致酿巨案等情。经倭什布查阅原词。有提督之兵无不通贼之语。殊不成话。当经降旨将伊朝栋革职。交倭什布亲提审讯。将伊呈内所称提督之兵无不通贼之语。令其切实指出凭据。并令查明是否系伊秉绶怂恿具控。

Summary :Yi Bingshou's father Yi Chaodong was accused for exaggerating the facts and sending biased information to the central government.

兹据倭什布覆奏、讯据伊朝栋供称、伊子伊秉绶任惠州府时。于七年八月闲。访闻博罗县匪徒有结会聚众之事。曾面禀吉总督孙提督请发兵往捕。吉总督恐激成事端。谕令再加确查。后来陈烂屐四果然闹事。吉总督调兵剿捕。伊子率同守城。彼时曾向询问贼情。据说现获贼目朱得贵、系提标皂白田泛兵。又窝留贼目之犯卓亚五、亦系提标兵丁。均经吉总督讯明正法。我闻了此事。心中骇异。后来儿子奉旨发往军台效力赎罪。我因朱得贵、卓亚五、都是提标兵丁。而提督并未议罪。心里不甘。是以具呈投递。至无不通贼之语。实是我老悖糊涂、措词过当等语。质之伊秉绶、供亦相同。并据询之前在惠州总理军需之臬司邱庭濬、知获解贼目朱得贵、及窝留贼匪之卓亚五、均系提标兵丁属实等语。粤省提标兵数繁多。此内查有一二与匪徒潜通为逆者。原属法所不贷。彼时吉庆拏获朱得贵卓亚五二犯、既经讯明系属提标兵丁。即应一面办理。一面据实陈奏。将该管营员并提督、并请治以失察之咎。总督统辖行伍。吉庆亦当自请议处。方为得体。乃于获解后。虽经当明正法。并未具奏。以致伊朝栋因未见提督被议。心怀不平。递呈控诉。此皆因吉庆办理不善之故。设其身尚在。必当惩以应得之罪。今已自戕。毋庸再议。伊朝栋呈控有因。本可加恩开复。但伊既具呈申诉。即应将所闻二犯指明呈出。乃率称提督之兵无不通贼。是执一二为匪之迹。遽行污蔑阖营良善兵丁。设此语传播。被众共知。岂不大有关系。伊朝栋张大其词。希图耸听。殊属不合。今业已革职。亦毋庸再行治罪。至伊秉绶在任时。访闻博罗县属匪徒有拜会聚众之事。即经面禀总督提督发兵往捕。总因吉庆未肯发兵。酿成巨案。据倭什布奏称、惠州绅士、均有总督不听知府之言、未早扑灭之语。此与刘清豫料教匪必抢太和镇、禀知魁伦而魁伦不听、情事相同。是伊秉绶于匪徒滋事之案。尚非隐匿不报。此次伊朝栋呈控。亦非出伊怂恿。其罪转属可宽。伊秉绶业经另案革职。著加恩免其发往军台效力。即行释放回籍。提督孙全谋、于所属兵丁为贼窝匪。漫无觉察。实难辞咎。孙全谋、著交部议处。其朱得贵卓亚五二犯之该管各营员、并著该督查明奏请严加议处。

Emperor Jiaqing, Reflection on Boluo rebellion

癸巳。谕内阁、朕前闻广东博罗县有重犯越狱。知县刘嘉颖不行详报。臬司陈文、及该管知府、扶同徇隐。复告知藩司、将该县典史调补烟瘴示罚。又粤东赃罚银两。按县摊派。批解臬司、作为陋规吴俊在任时曾经收受。升任起程时。又派此项以作路费等事。当经亲书密谕。令吉庆、瑚图礼、密查具奏。朕以此事尚属风闻。虚实未定。兹据吉庆等查明覆奏。皆系实有其事。将藩臬府县等分别参革。并自请严议前来。披阅之下殊堪感叹。更深凜畏。各直省设立督抚。原以纠察属吏。惟在见闻周密。有敝□大必除。庶属员等知所儆惧。吏治自臻整肃。若必待朕先有所闻。降旨询问。督抚始行查办。则安用督抚为耶。试思四海之广。臣民之众。为人君者安能一一周知。虽以尧舜之君。明目达聪。设无九官十二牧。为之分职亮功。亦何能从欲以治乎。今粤东吏治若此。而吉庆、瑚图礼、竟懵然不知。直至朕指出情节。严切密询。伊二人始访查得实。以此类推。则各省似此通同舞弊□大之事。或更有大于此者。未经朕闻知查询。因循不办。又不知凡几矣。知人之明。用人之难。朕实愧且惧。惟尽此求治之苦心耳。至外省一切陋规。早应随时禁革。粤东借赃罚为名。按缺派送银两。相沿已久。督抚并不查办。一经朕询问。始据实陈奏。可见此等陋规未经革除者尚复不少。今既经发觉。即不能置之不办。所有博罗县绞犯越狱一案。知县刘嘉颖、私禀臬司。匿不详报。竟敢有意消弭。情殊可恶。今案犯业已拏获。姑著照所拟革职发往伊犁效力赎罪。典史李清、系管狱官。并不小心防范。以致要犯脱逃。亦著革职发往军台效力赎罪。惠州府知府伊秉绶、系亲临上司。任听该县匿报。不行揭参。著革职。惠潮嘉道胡克家、于所属越狱重案。不行揭报。著交部严加议处。藩司常龄、经陈文告知此案。并不照例揭参。辄将该典史改调烟瘴地方。调停其事。实属胆大妄为。著先革去顶带。仍交部严加议处。臬司陈文、于路过惠州时。该县已将监犯越狱之事面禀。陈文并不揭参。亦未令其通禀。且经收受赃罚银两。陈文前因年老难胜臬司之任。已令来京候旨。即著革职、交刑部审讯治罪。现在行抵何处。著该省督抚派员管押来京。升任山东藩司吴俊、于广东臬司任内。既经得受赃罚银两。起程时又复将此项作为路费。实属卑鄙。亦著革职。令祖之望委员管押来京。交刑部审讯治罪。吉庆、瑚图礼、于所属匿报重案。及收受陋规。漫无觉察。直同木偶。均著

Appendix. III Image

Figure 1. Yi Bingshou, *Sui Xing Cao Tang* 遂性草堂, Ink on Paper, 1815

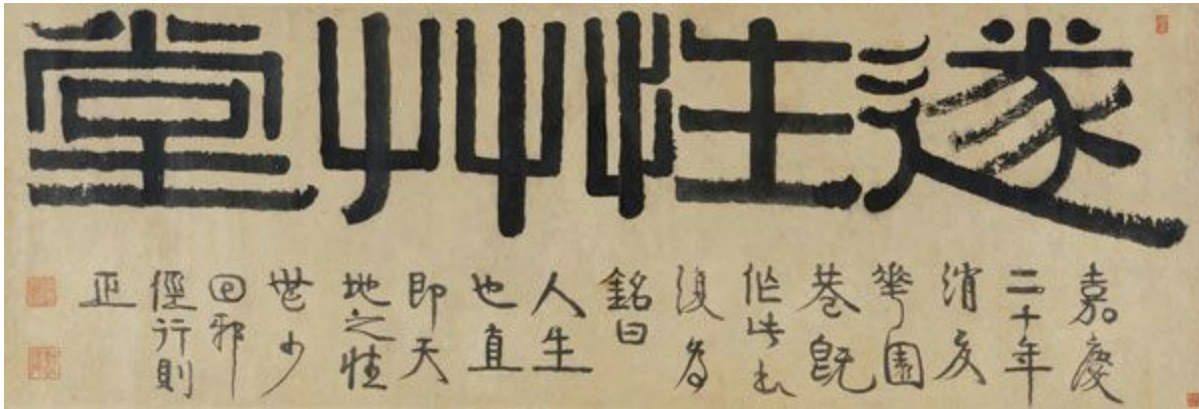
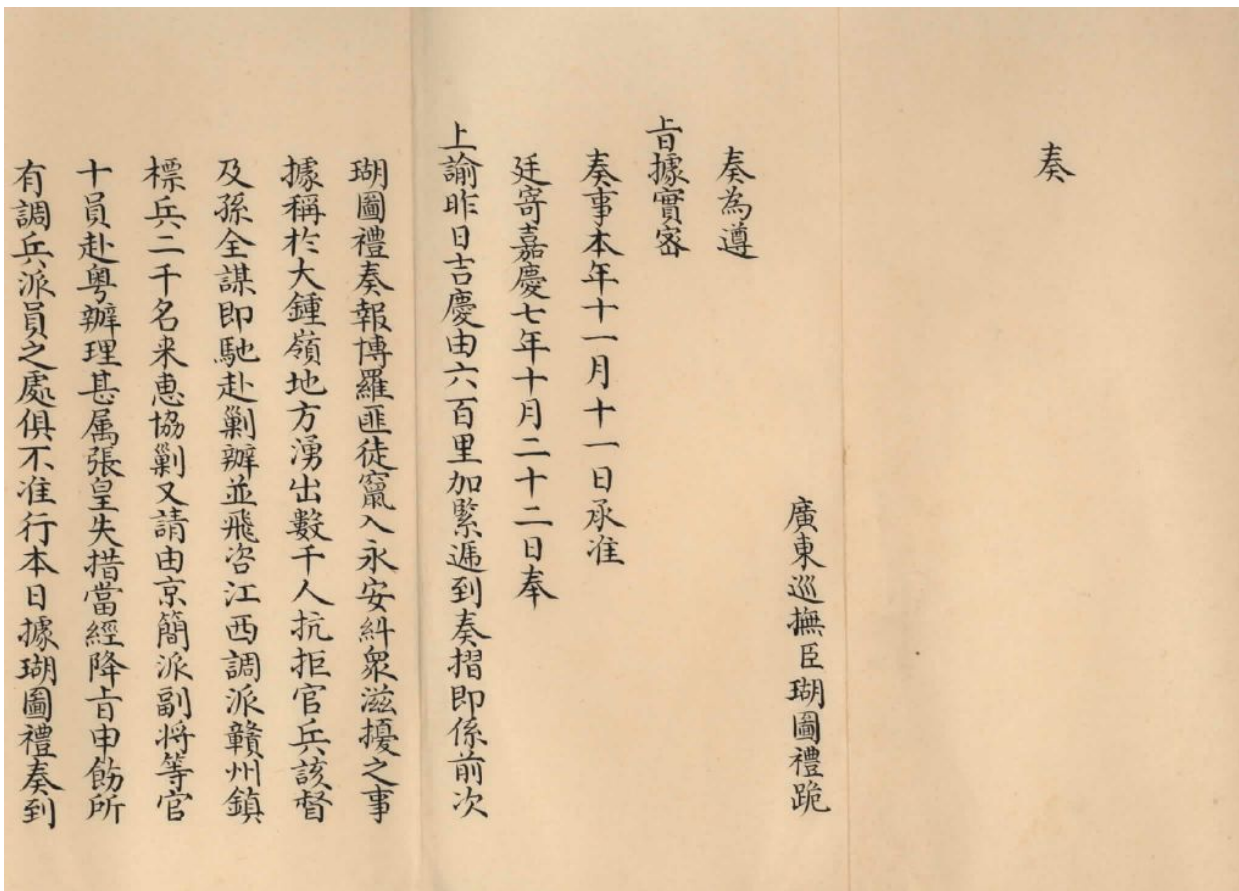


Figure 2. Hutu Li, *Military report*, Example of Guange script, Ink on Paper, 1806



軍機大臣 字寄

廣東巡撫瑚 嘉慶七年十月二十二日奉

上諭昨日吉慶由六百里加緊速到奏摺即係前次

瑚圖禮奏報博羅匪徒竄入永安糾眾滋擾之事

據稱於大鍾嶺地方湧出數千人抗拒官兵該督

及孫全謀即馳赴勦辦並飛咨江西調派贛州鎮

標兵二千名來惠協勦又請簡派副將等官十員

赴粵辦理甚屬張皇當經降旨申飭所有調兵派

員之處俱不准行本日據瑚圖禮奏到之摺據稱

書敬現帶滿兵五百名赴永安協勦並接據邱庭

澹來稟吉慶派委遊擊胡俊鴻等與孫全謀前往

勦捕不日即可撲滅其博羅各路村民俱各安貼

等語查吉慶昨日之摺係初六日拜發邱庭澹

之稟瑚圖禮於初五日接到邱庭澹現隨吉慶

軍營其所稟情節賊勢並無難辦何以吉慶遽爾

再臣訪聞得陳爛屐四一案官兵到後適值該
犯妄殺其黨羽以致人心不服影匪解散是以
官兵乘勢得勝曾清浩寺一案遊擊胡俊鴻帶
兵先到奮勇打仗賊匪退避由是道路疏通迨
提臣孫全謀續到則專主招安並不勦捕凡百
姓之受賊荼毒者蓄憤莫伸頗多怨恨等語合

行密

奏

Figure 3, Zhang Zhao, *Imitation of Mi Fu's script Cao Zhi's poem*, Ink on Paper



Figure 4. Yi Bingshou, *Running script on Hanging Scroll*, Ink on Paper, 1811

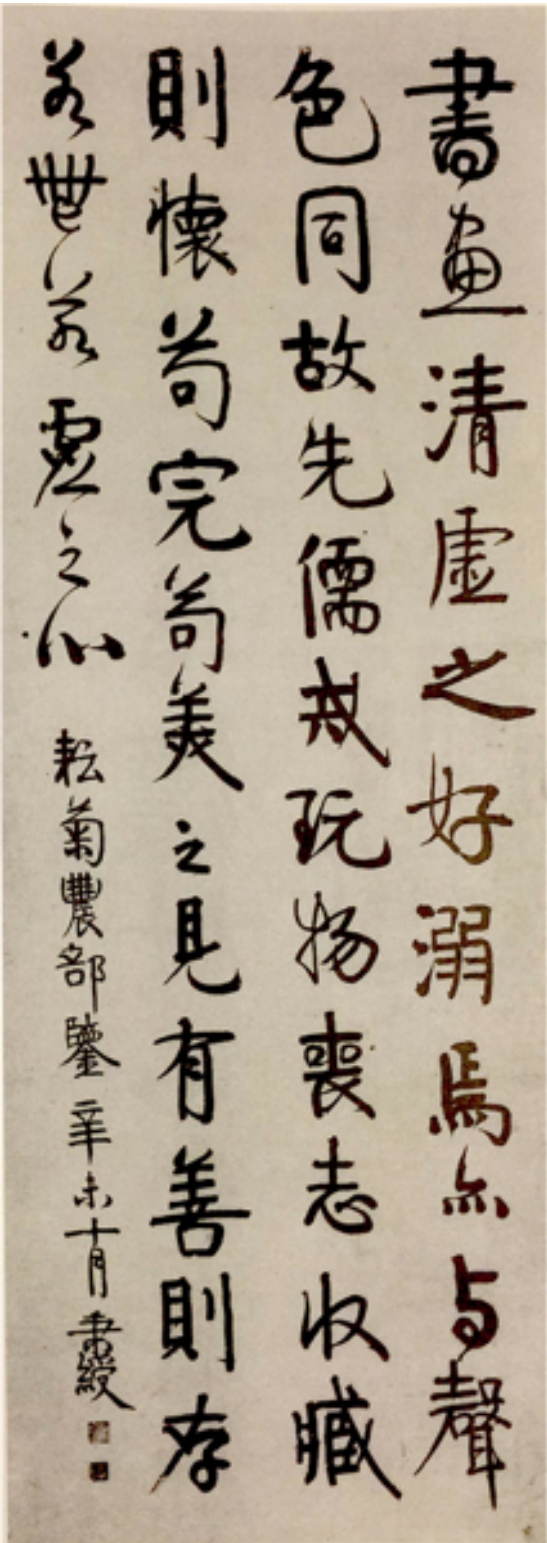


Figure 5.0, Yi Bingshou’s Scholarly Rock , “*Descending Goose Peak*”, Scholarly Limestone



Figure 6 Imperial Collection, Rocks from Lake Tai, Beihai Park, China



Figure 7 Imperial Collection, *Jade miniature mountain with figure of arhat*, undated

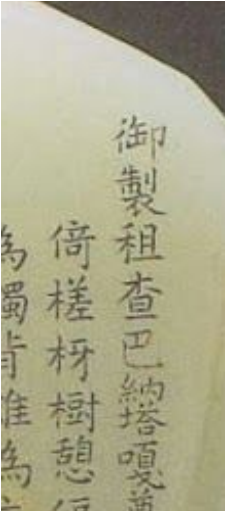


Figure 8 Yi Bingshou, *Essay on the Qin dynasty Standard Script*, Ink on Paper, undated

白
秦并海內兼諸侯南面稱帝以養四海天下之士靡
然鄉風若是者何也曰近古之無王者久矣周室
卑微五伯既歿令不行於天下是以諸侯力政疆
侵弱衆暴寡兵革不休士民罷敝今秦南面王
天下是上有天子也既元之民其得安其性命
莫不虛心而仰心當此之時守威定功安危之本
在於此矣秦王懷貪鄙之心行自奮之智不信
功臣不親士民廢王道立私權禁文書而酷刑法

Figure 9 Wang Xizhi, "Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion, Ink on Paper,

Tang dynasty copies

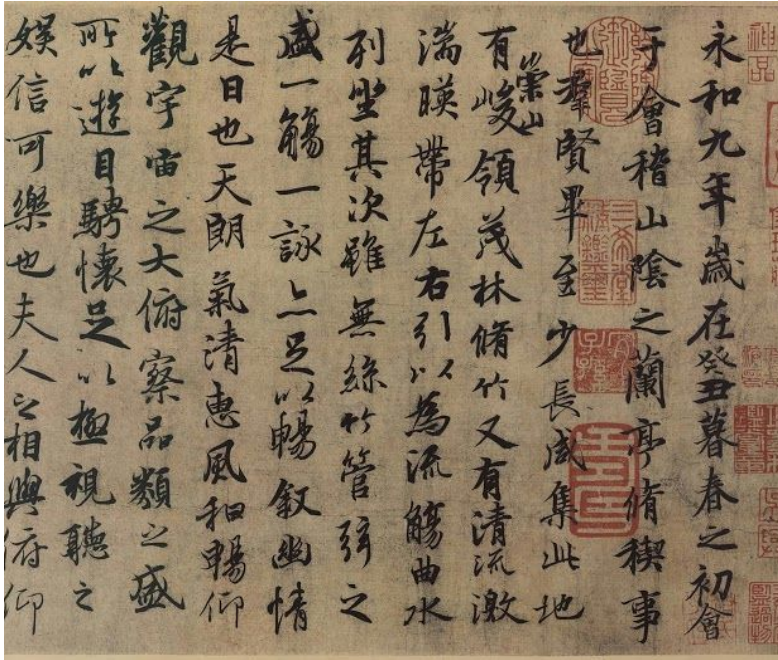


Figure 10 Yi Bingshou, Copies of Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion, Ink on Paper, Undated

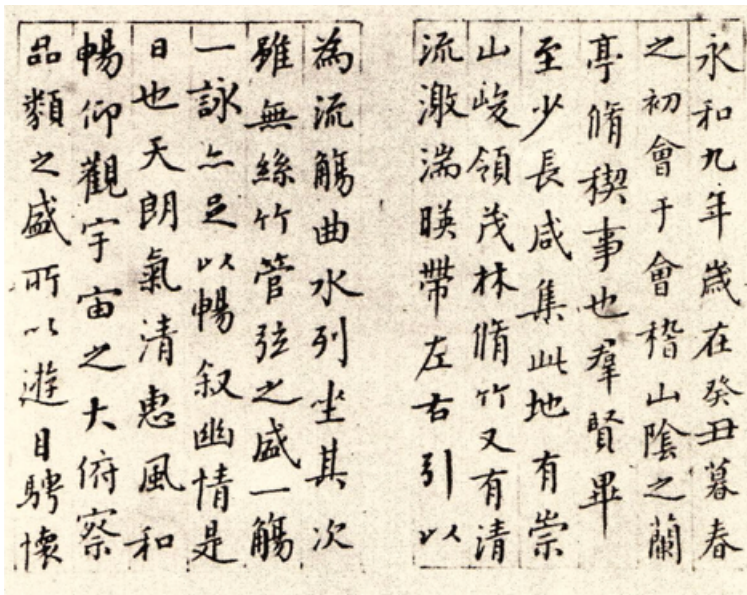


Figure 11.0 Original Zhangqian stele stone, Stone Rubbings, Image edited by the author, 186 CE



Figure 11.1 Yi Bingshou, Copies of Zhangqian stele, Ink on Paper ,undated



Figure 12.0 Original Hengfang Stele, Stone Rubbings ,Stone Rubbings, 168 CE



Figure 12.1 Yi Bingshou, Copies of Hengfang Stele, undated

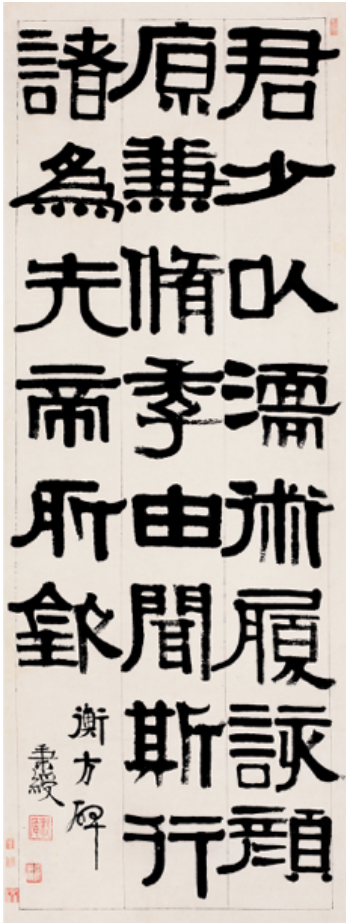


Figure 13.0 Liu Qijin, Collection of Su Shi's Script and written in Su Shi's text, Photo,1991

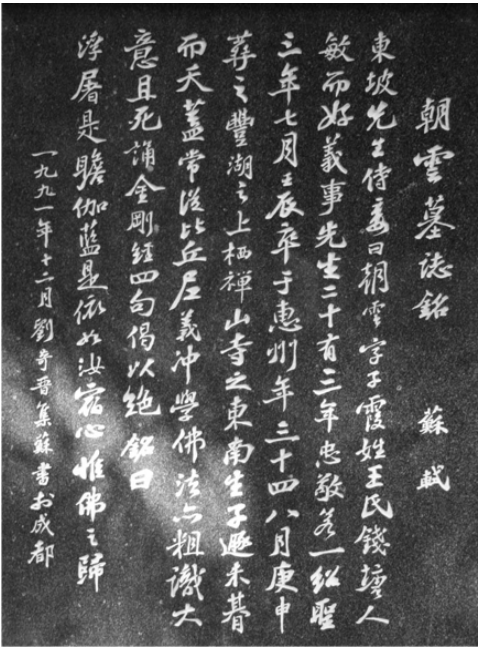


Figure 13.1 Yi Bingshou, Su Shi's Memorial to Wang Zhaoyun, Photo 1801

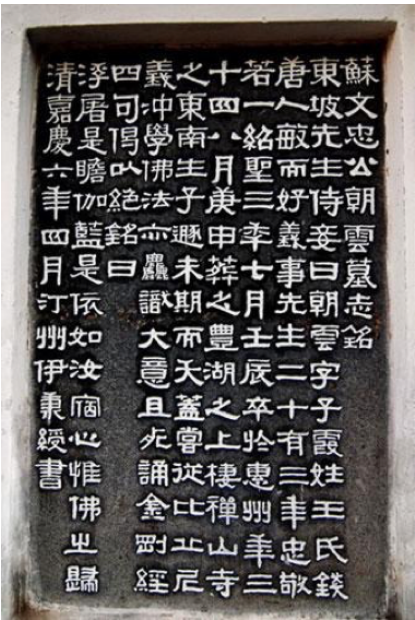


Figure 14.0 Yi Bingshou, Seal Script, Ink on Paper, undated

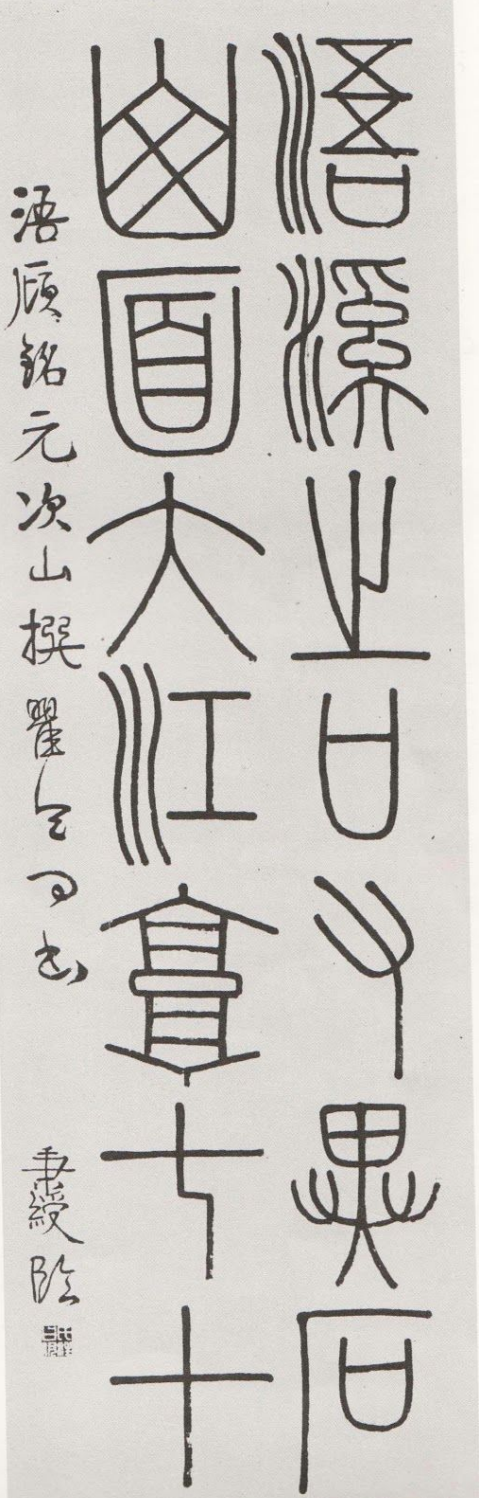


Figure 15 Yi Bingshou, Seal script, Ink on Paper, 1804. undated

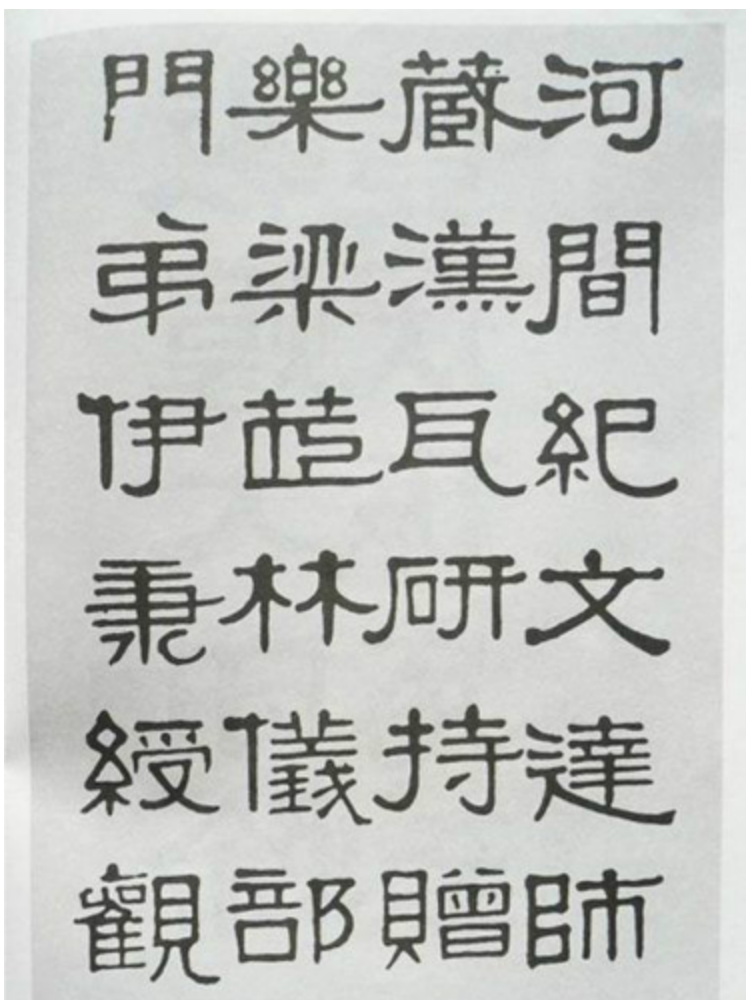


Figure 16 Yi Bingshou, Running script on a Fan, Ink on Paper , undated



Figure 17, Yi Bingshou, *Running script Hanging Scroll*, Ink on Paper , P54, undated

