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*Frederick W. Mote, W. F. Anita Siu, "Part B: Scripts and Artistic Traditions Preserved in Epigraphy", *The Gest Library Journal* 2, no. 2 (1988): 35-48, accessed January 14, 2017, https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/goodman_howard_1.EALJ.v02.n02.p001.1.1.pdf*

Part B. Scripts and Artistic Traditions Preserved in Epigraphy

During the Han period (204 B.C.-220 A.D.) the writing materials used by calligraphers reached their final stage of development. The writer's brush and ink, although already in use for over a millennium, were refined and improved, and by the third century A.D. a relatively recent invention, high quality paper, virtually displaced silk. These material factors led to changes in script styles. The small seal form (*hsiao-chuan*) standardized in the third century B.C. gave way to the simpler and more fluid clerical script (*li*). It in turn was modified, in pursuit of the speed and fluency made possible by the use of brush on paper. Cursive adaptations of scripts were already used occasionally in the texts written on wooden strips and on silk. In the Han period when clerical script was the dominant form of writing, cursive adaptations of it led to the beginnings of what is called *chang ts'ao*, which may be translated "draft cursive." Another modification of clerical script called *pa-fen* style was written with deliberate grace, appropriate to monumental uses. Writing was in a period of fluid, creative development when forms proliferated and individual styles could bring fame to their creators. Calligraphy was emerging as high art.

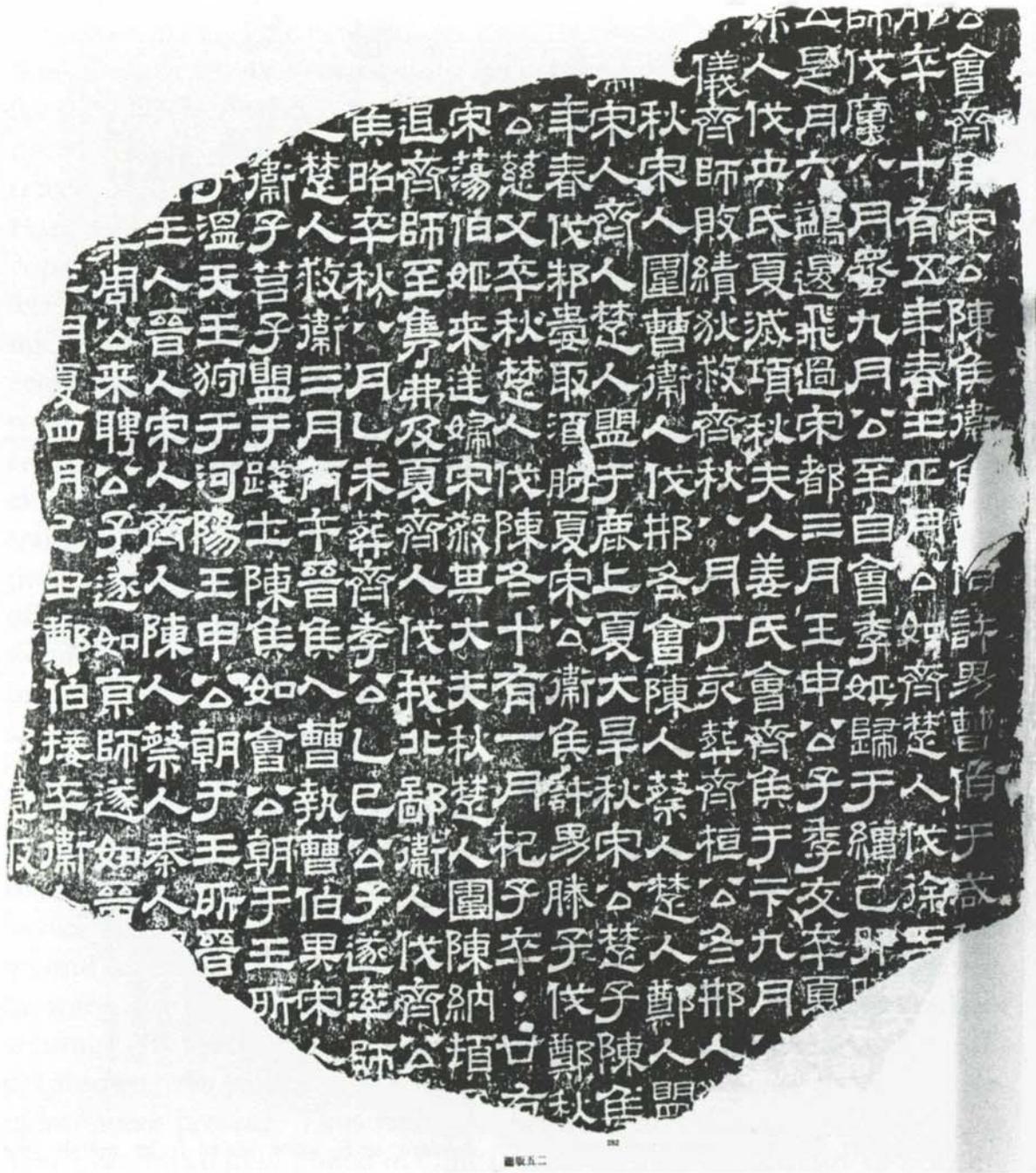
By the end of the Han period three new forms of calligraphy were being differentiated and standardized. The cursive forms were differentiated as *hsing* ("running script") and *ts'ao* ("grass writing"). A new and simpler standard script also took shape, to become known as *chen* or *k'ai* ("model script"). This is the standard script still used today. By the fourth and fifth centuries all of these ways of writing Chinese had acquired their distinctive norms.

Unfortunately, the original works of this period's great calligraphy masters are with very few exceptions no longer extant. Our material evidence for their achievements is found principally in epigraphy. The calligraphy of noted writers, often important political or ritual statements, was carefully traced onto smooth stone surfaces and engraved. Some stones from the Han, and even earlier periods still exist. But for the most part we have copies descended from rubbings of engraved stones (stelae) or wooden tablets that no longer exist. The technique of making rubbings (ink squeezes, ink prints) from inscriptions dates from no later than the fifth or sixth century A.D. This permitted relatively accurate copies to be widely disseminated. Nonetheless, our epigraphic evidence often is engravings from re-tracings of tracings, or from freehand copies of copies. Although the evidence is not often direct, it has not diminished in its importance for the transmission of forms and styles. Historically, the period from the Han to the end of the Six Dynasties (late sixth century) created the mature forms of calligraphy and transmitted the models by transferring them to stone and duplicating the images as rubbings, in Chinese called *t'o-pen*. Such copies have been the focus of intense artistic involvement for close to two thousand years. They constitute the fountainhead of China's premier artistic tradition.

As we take note of the importance for art history of this technique for preserving the achievements of the early calligraphers, we must also note that rubbings are a form of printing. Texts so duplicated functioned as books. Lengthy Confucian classics were engraved on stone as early as the second century A.D. Other secular and religious texts also were engraved, as were mortuary inscriptions, government notices, and other kinds of writings. Rubbings were made of all of these, whether because the calligraphic art was valued or the text was important. In many cases both elements were present. Thus from the beginnings, calligraphy and printing have been intimately linked in China. Although the technology of printing changed after the seventh century, these links remained.

Here we see two groups of rubbings providing evidence for the development of calligraphy: one group preserves items originally produced from the third to the sixth centuries when the forms of writing were being standardized; the second group represents great calligraphers from the seventh to the eleventh centuries.

All of the labels in this part are written by Siu.



13. *Stone classics of Hsi-p'ing (Hsi-p'ing shih-ching)*. Rubbing of inscription in clerical script.

Calligrapher: attr. Ts'ai Yung (132-192).

Date: 175-183.

Dimensions: 52 x 46 cm.

Source: Ma Heng, *Han shih-ching chi-chuan* (Peking: K'o-hsüeh ch'u-pan, 1957) 2, p. 52.

Stone tablets engraved with the texts of the classics were erected as imperial standards of Confucian teaching, serving as monumental textbooks. Some horizontal and diagonal strokes attempt to convey grace, but the squarish characters in general identify with the grid space, rather than with the suggested undulatory movement.



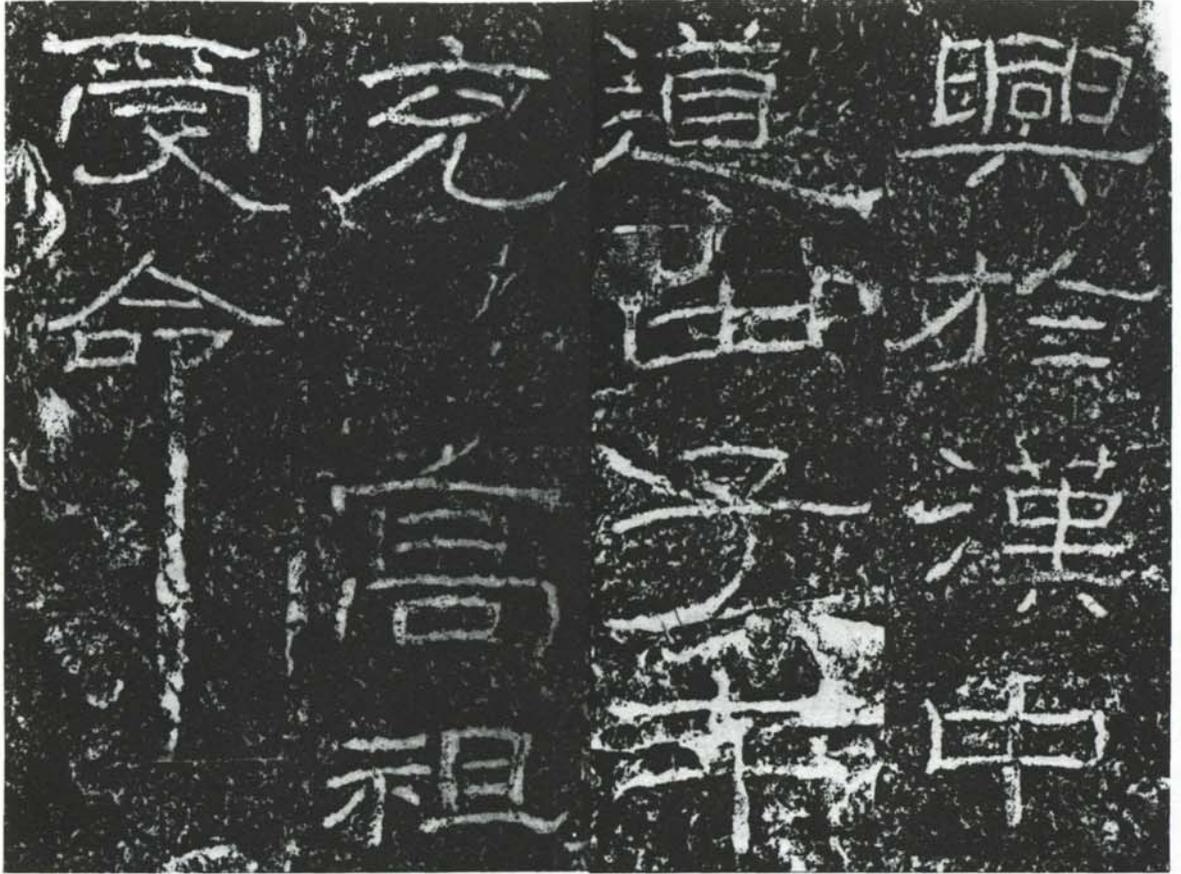
14. *Stone classics in three styles (San-tzu shih-ching)*. Rubbing of inscription in seal and clerical scripts.

Date: 240-248.

Dimensions: 25 x 16.5 cm.

Source: Sun Hai-p'o, *Wei san-tzu shih-ching chi-lu* (rpt. Taipei: I-wen, 1975), pp. 4b-5a.

This official stone engraving of the Confucian classics was based on an older edition that had escaped the burning of books in the Ch'in dynasty. The text was written in three collated scripts: two seal scripts, both a fancy, Ch'in dynasty archaic style and the small seal style, and a rigidly composed clerical script. The overall tone is one of ornamentation.



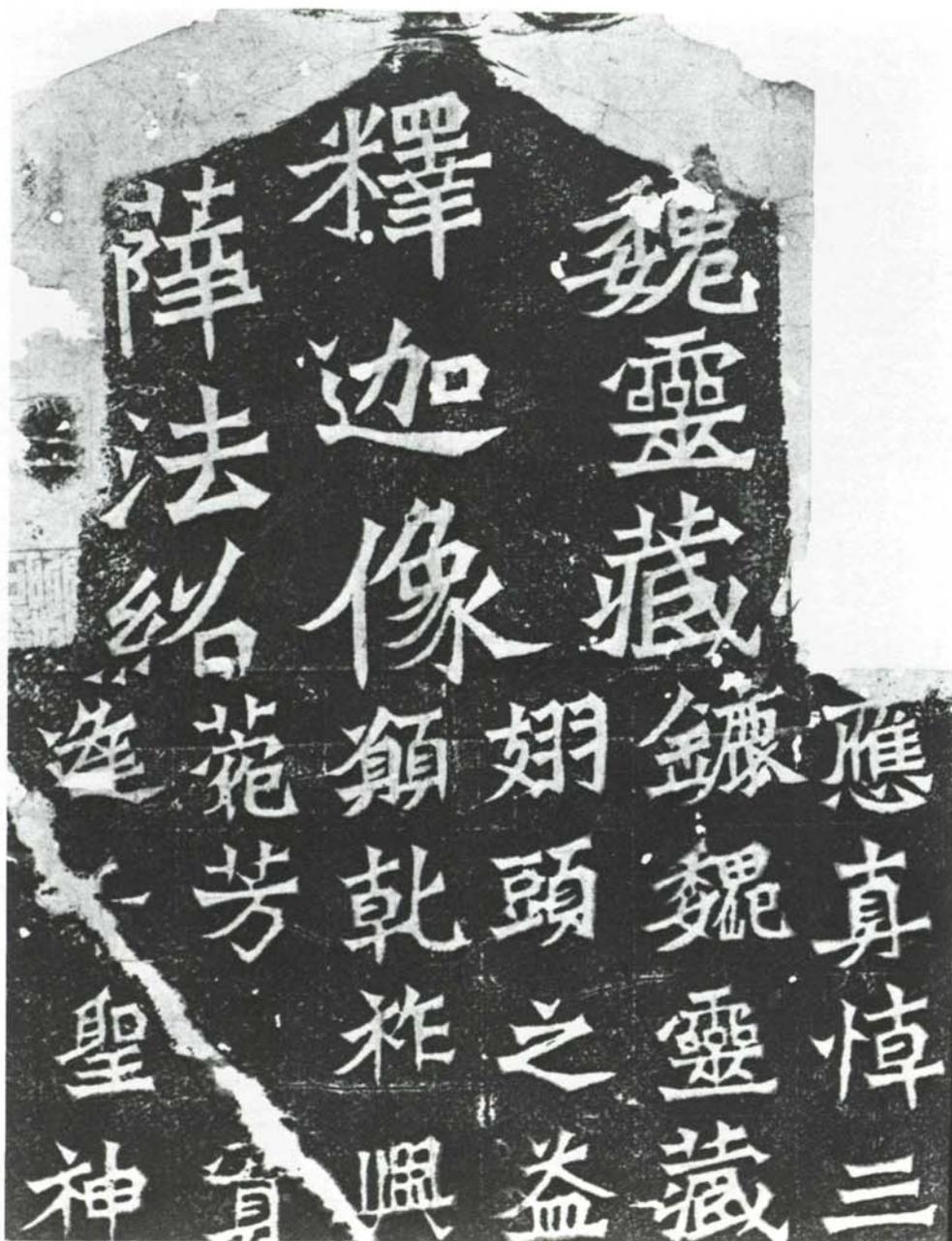
15. *The eulogy at Stone Gate (Shih-men sung)*. Rubbing of inscription in clerical script.

Date: 148 A.D.

Dimensions: 26.4 x 17.6 cm.

Source: *Shodō* 2, nos. 80-81; original inscription in Pao-ch'eng, Shensi.

Inscribed on a natural rock cliff located on an ancient highway in Shensi province, this is a masterpiece of *mo-yai*, or cliff epigraphy. We see an already regularized clerical script in harmony with the natural rock surface. The strokes are rounded and the wavy movement is subtly pleasing without being ornamental or contrived. The elongated and thickened final stroke of the character “*ming*” (the last character in the illustration) lends unexpected variety to the work.



16. Buddhist votive stele dedicated by Wei Ling-ts'ang (Wei Ling-ts'ang tsao-hsiang chi). Rubbing of inscription in regular script.

Date: early 6th century.

Dimensions: 28 x 21.75 cm.

Source: Pei-ching t'u-shu-kuan, comp. *Lung-men ssu-p'in* (Peking: Wen-wu, 1979), p. 40; inscriptions located in Ku-yang Cave, Lungmen Grotto, Lo-yang, Honan province.

This Ku-yang Cave inscription was a dedicatory text commemorating the carving of Buddhist images. It represents the northern stele tradition, with regular scripts that reveal graphic awareness. The heavy, blunt, and weighty structure, the angular corners and wedge-shaped strokes all contribute to a primitive and forceful feeling.



17. Stele from a Confucian temple (*K'ung-tzu miao-t'ang pei*). Rubbing of inscription in regular script.

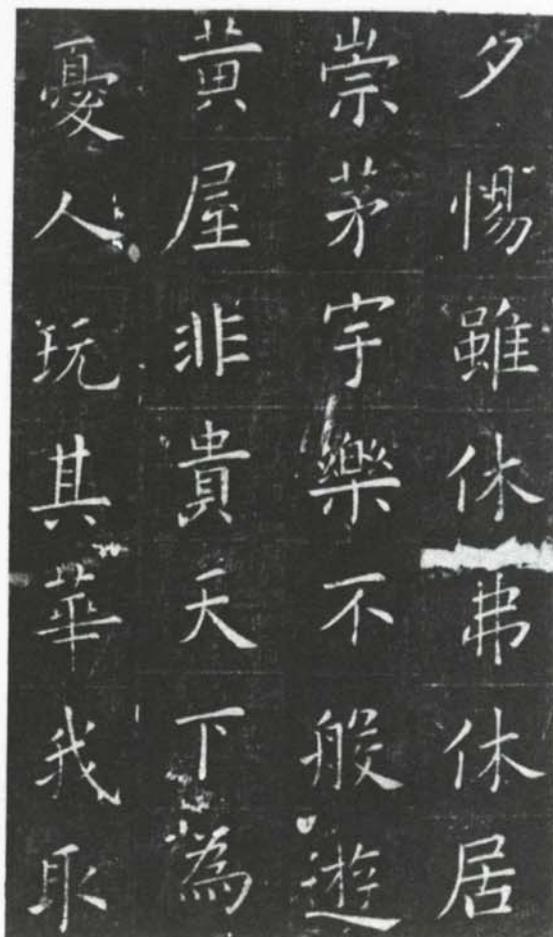
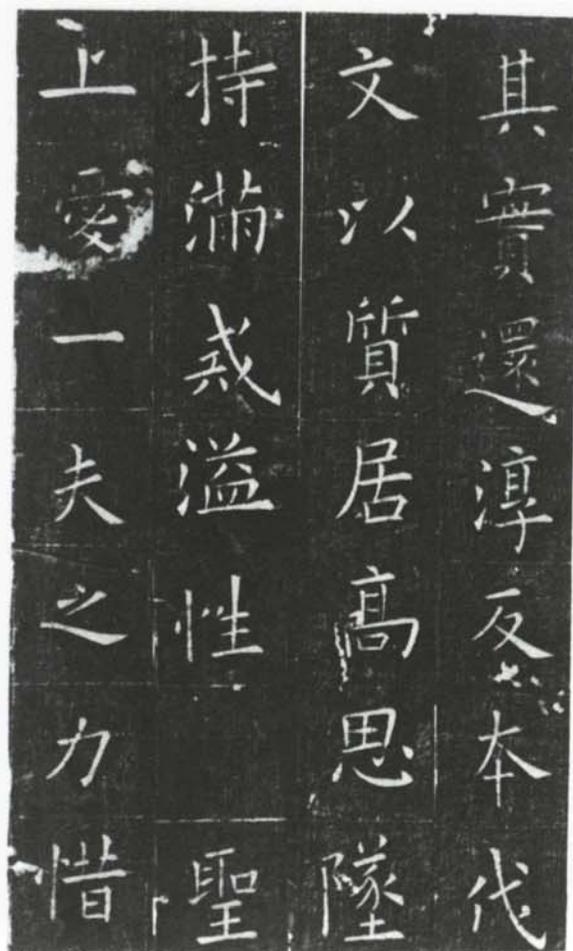
Calligrapher: Yü Shih-nan (558-638).

Date: 627 A.D.

Dimensions: 25 x 16.5 cm.

Sources: *Miao-t'ang pei* 1, pp. 1, 2a; *Shodō* 7, nos. 69-76.

Modeled on the Wang Hsi-chih tradition, Yü Shih-nan faithfully adapted the former's elegant style to create a stately and ceremonial calmness. The rubbing represented here is a later recarved edition. (A rubbing of the original stele, which was destroyed, is in the Mitsui Collection in Japan).



18. *Eulogy to the sweet spring at Chiu-ch'eng palace (Chiu-ch'eng-kung li-ch'üan ming).*
Rubbing of inscription in regular script.

Calligrapher: Ou-yang Hsün (557-641).

Date: 632 A.D.

Dimensions: 24.25 x 14.25 cm.

Source: *Chiu-ch'eng-kung li-ch'üan ming*, pp. 1b-2a; original stele in Sian, Shensi.

Ou-yang Hsün has successfully captured the solidity and angularity of northern stele writing in this work. The characters were composed according to the Wang Hsi-chih tradition, with Ou-yang's unique, slender configuration.



19. *Stele of the Yen family shrine (Yen-shih chia-miao pei)*. Rubbing of inscription in regular script.

Author: Yen Chen-ch'ing (709-785).

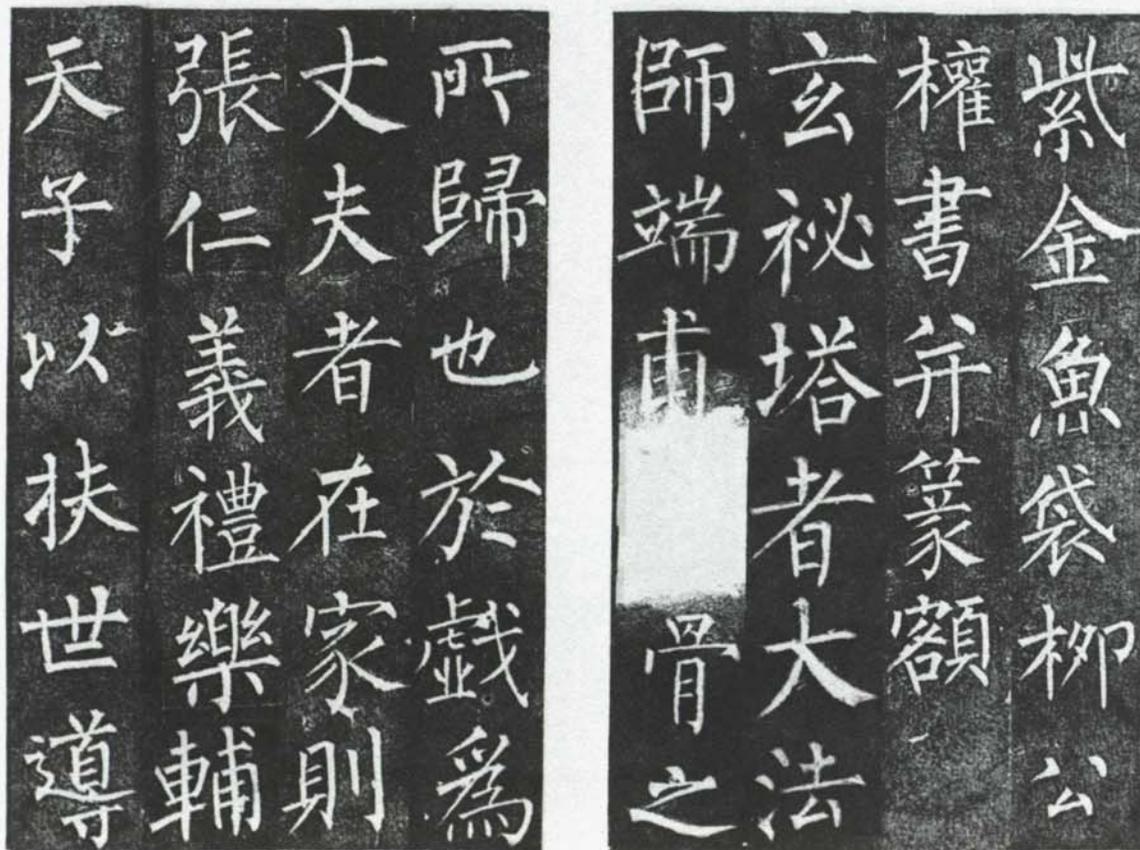
Calligrapher: Yen Chen-ch'ing.

Date: 780 A.D.

Dimensions: 25.5 x 15 cm.

Source: *Yen-chia-miao pei*, pp. 2b-3a.

Yen Chen-ch'ing created a new model in Chinese calligraphy with his monumental boldness and expansiveness. The smooth corners and the fullness of his strokes (simulating the stroke quality of ancient seal script) indicate the aim to archaize and simplify. Ingeniously, he created energetic hooks to enliven the heaviness of his style.



20. *The Tower of Dark Mystery of Monk Ta-ta (Ta-ta fa-shih hsüan-pi-t'a pei).*

Rubbing of inscription in regular script.

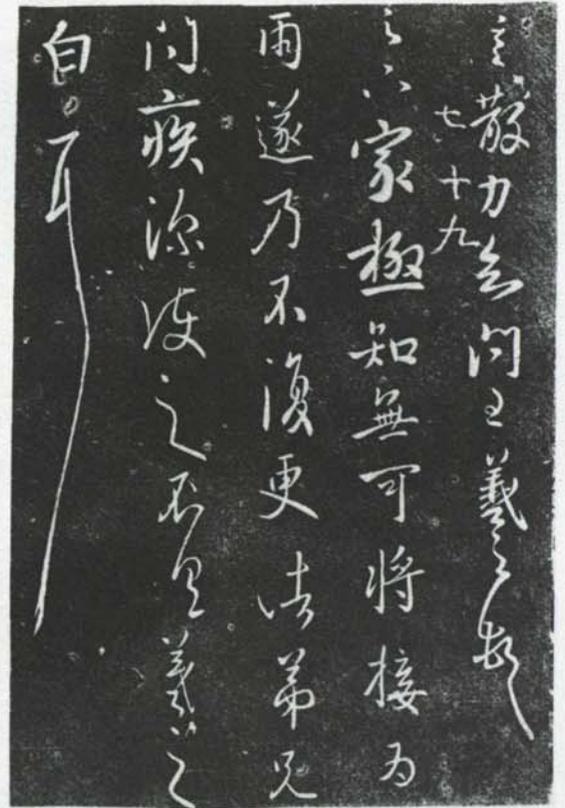
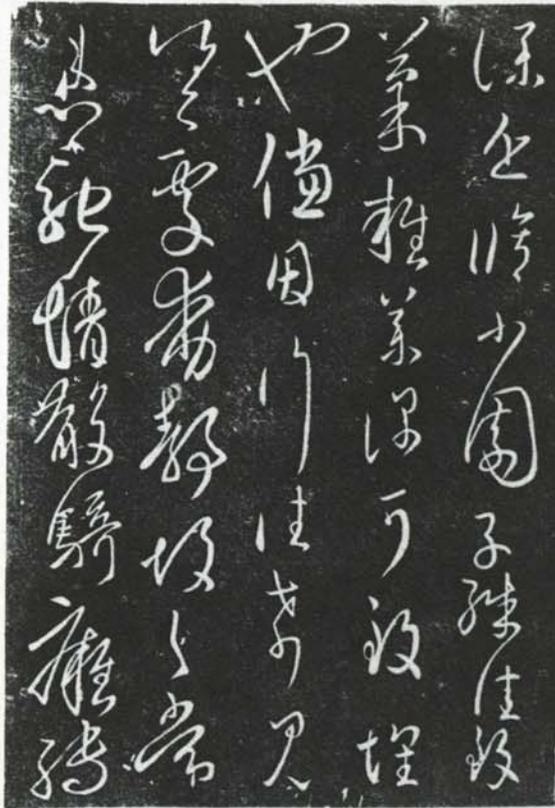
Calligrapher: Liu Kung-ch'üan (778-865).

Date: 841 A.D.

Dimensions: 26.5 x 17 cm.

Source: *Hsüan-pi-t'a pei*, pp. 3b-4a.

Liu's calligraphy shared Yen Chen-ch'ing's expansive and heroic proportion, but enjoyed at the same time an angular and spacious elegance.



21. *Ch'un-hua Pavilion Anthology (Ch'un-hua-ko t'ieh)*. Rubbing of inscription in cursive style.

Date: 992 A.D.

Dimensions: 24 x 16.25 cm.

Source: *Ch'un-hua-ko t'ieh* 7, pp. 19b-20a.

Published by imperial command in 992, this anthology compiled by Wang Chu initiated the tradition of *t'ieh*, calligraphical manuscripts reproduced by carved stone slabs or wood-blocks as models for calligraphy students. The cursive style (seen here) is but one of several styles represented in the anthology. Materials were selected from the imperial collection, but their authenticity and authority have been questioned ever since initial publication. The selection also emphasized heavily the Wang Hsi-chih tradition, an example of which is represented here. Through imperial promotion, the Wang school's predominant position in Chinese calligraphy was further strengthened.

宋蘇軾書

自秋來黃州已過

三寒今年一缺

惜春言不容移令

年又苦雨多月秋

蕭瑟河海崇

茫泥污並支雪

閣中偷負吾

夜半具有如何

殊少年亦病題

經上白

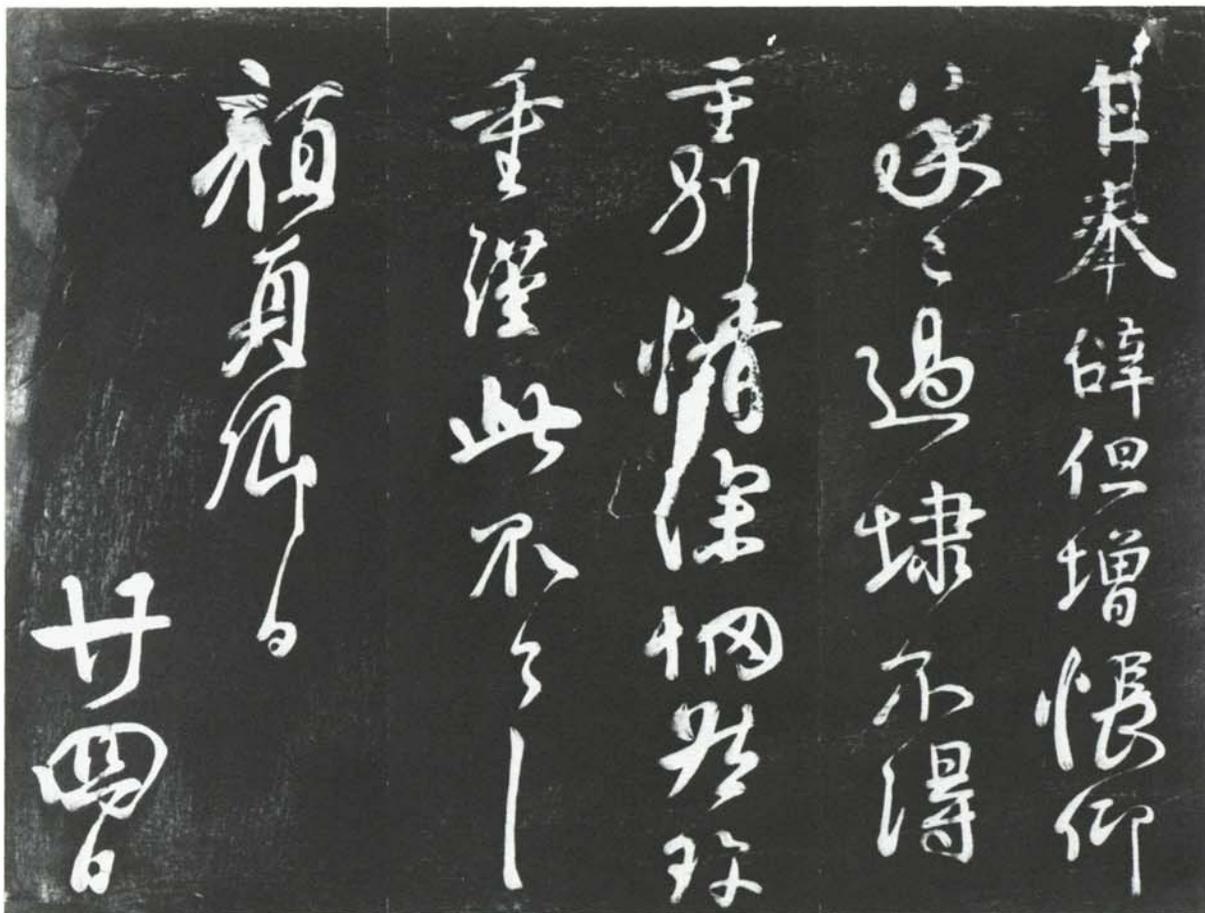
22. *Anthology of the Hall of Three Rarities* (*San-hsi-t'ang fa-t'ieh*). Rubbing of inscription in cursive script.

Date: 1747.

Dimensions: 30 x 71 cm.

Source: Liang Shih-cheng et al., comps., *Yü-k'o san-hsi-t'ang shih-ch'ü-pao-chi fa-t'ieh* 11, pp. 1-3a.

In 1747 the Ch'ien-lung emperor sponsored a project to publish calligraphy anthologies like *Ch'un-hua-ko t'ieh*. The title of the anthology was taken from the emperor's studio. Represented here is a rubbing of "Huang-chou han-shih t'ieh" written by Su Shih, whose calligraphic style was characterized by a tightly interlocked internal structure and a free spirit of execution.



23. *Anthology of the Hall of Early Snow*
(*K'uai-hsüeh-t'ang fa-t'ieh*). Rubbing of
inscription.

Date: 1779.

Dimensions: 28.5 x 40 cm.

Source: Feng Ch'üan, *K'uai-hsüeh-t'ang fa-shu*
(n.p., n.d.), pp. 20a-21a.

This is from the second calligraphy anthology sponsored by the Ch'ien-lung emperor. To hold the carved stone slabs a special hall was constructed. The example shown here is a rubbing of Yen Chen-ch'ing's cursive style, with a quite forceful momentum.