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*Frederick W. Mote, Hung-Lam Chu, "5. Calligraphy's New Importance in Later Ming Printing", The Gest Library Journal 2, no. 2 (1988): 167-202, accessed January 14, 2017, [https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/goodman\\_howard\\_1.EALJ.v02.n02.p001.5.pdf](https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/goodman_howard_1.EALJ.v02.n02.p001.5.pdf)*

# 5. CALLIGRAPHY'S NEW IMPORTANCE IN LATER MING PRINTING

The high standards of calligraphy in Song books, both the printed and the handwritten, were maintained in the Ming. The quality of the printed books of the Ming was generally high, and the quality of the handwritten books was also high. The high standards of calligraphy in Ming books were maintained in the printed books of the Ming. The high standards of calligraphy in Ming books were maintained in the printed books of the Ming.

The later Ming printers tried in various ways to escape these trends. Some consciously imitated the high standards of renowned Song books by having printers block out from pages written in distinctive calligraphy. More commonly, however, the overall quality of the printed books was maintained by imitating the high standards of calligraphy in the handwritten books. This included the title page, a discussion of "forewords" and "afterwords," and "colophons" which were often written in calligraphy. The calligrapher might also include a preface or a postscript. The quality of the calligraphy in the printed books was generally high, and the quality of the handwritten books was also high. The high standards of calligraphy in Ming books were maintained in the printed books of the Ming.



With a vast expansion in the quantity of printing after 1500, both the artistic standards of the script styles used in printing and the quality of the block cutting tended to decline. In place of characters that previously could be identified as "Yen style" or "Ou-yang style" or "Chao style," mid-Ming printers began using homogenized styles loosely designated "Sung dynasty characters" (*Sung-t'i tzu*). With repeated application to wooden blocks by ordinary craftsmen, such nondescript calligraphy came to be called "craftsmen script" (*chiang-t'i*). This dominance by the artisan indicates a broad trend toward dull standardization of Chinese script, presenting an overall uniformity, as in the mechanically produced fonts of Western alphabets; consequently, individualistic liveliness and expressiveness waned. The high standards of calligraphic style no longer prevailed in printing. If such books gained in legibility, they lost much of their presence and personality.

The better Ming printers tried in various ways to escape those trends. Some consciously imitated the high standards of treasured Sung books by having printing blocks cut from pages written in distinctive calligraphy. More commonly, however, the overall dullness of the artisan-produced book was counteracted by introducing facsimile printing of attractive calligraphy in the frontmatter (*chüan shou*) of a book, often including the title page, a succession of "forewords" and "prefaces," and "colophons" (occasionally also added to the end). For title pages the calligrapher might adopt clerical or seal script to give a touch of antique elegance. The remaining frontmatter often used the cursive "running" (*hsing*) or "grass" (*ts'ao*) scripts. Those prefaces and forwards would be signed by their authors, the presumption being that the quite personal calligraphy reproduced there was a faithful facsimile of their actual handwriting. That implicit assumption often was inaccurate; we show here examples where the signed calligraphy is falsely attributed, sometimes with intent to deceive, but sometimes not. Commercial publishers were quick to ape the modes of the fashionable world. Yet, whether or not there is apparent deception in the insertion of the *hsieh-k'o* (facsimile) prefaces and postfaces in books of that age, the visual impression on the reader is one of individuality — personalities perceived through distinctive calligraphy.

The Princeton University Art Museum has extensive holdings of original works of Ming calligraphers, often literati who were both scholar-authors and artists. In particular, a collection of Ming and Ch'ing letters provides samples of informal cursive writing styles of many of the eminent personages who most often contributed prefaces. These letters and other pieces of calligraphy, studied in conjunction with the examples of calligraphy printed in books, make possible numerous interesting studies of the uses of facsimile calligraphy in Ming and Ch'ing printing. This illustrates another facet of the relationship between calligraphy and printing. Some representative items are displayed here, including several "case studies" of truthfully and falsely attributed calligraphy of Ming scholars in Ming books.

The entire section is by Chu.

*Wang Wen-k'o kung chi* is the literary anthology of Wang Ao of Soochow, famous grand secretary and man of letters known in Ming times especially for his examination-style essays. Printed by Wang's great-great-grandsons in the family's San-huai t'ang, this edition, with a new title bearing Wang's posthumous name, was cut on the basis of a late 1530s edition with the same content but a different title.<sup>1</sup>

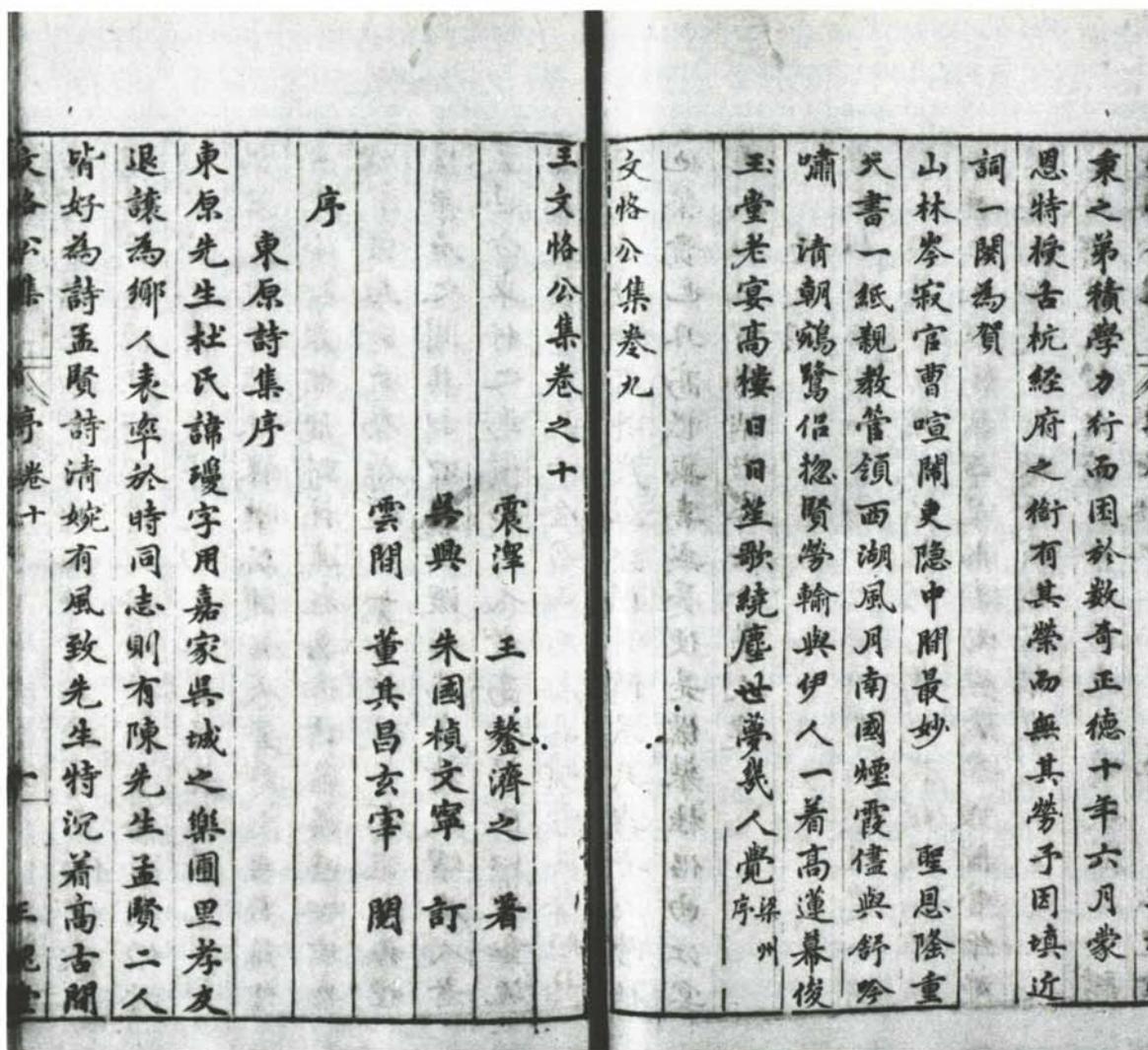
In the present copy (no. 90) fifteen of the thirty-five original *chüan* are missing. Several seals indicate that it was originally held by the Wang family. One of the seals reads "Twelfth-generation descendant of the honorable Wang Wen-k'o." Apart from a preface by Huo T'ao (1487-1540) for the earlier edition, the book bears two undated prefaces, by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1556-1637) of Hua-t'ing, Kiangsu, and by Chu Kuo-chen (died ca. 1625) of Wuhsing, Chekiang. Both men were also named as reviewers of the text (no. 90, cols. 3-4 of the left folio).

This is one of the most artistic *hsieh-k'o* (carved as written) books printed in the Ming. The beautiful calligraphy, with a touch of the lively Chao Meng-fu style, was done by an artist not identified in the book. According to the late Wang Chung-min, this calligrapher was none other than Ch'en Yüan-shu (fl. 1590-1630) of Ch'ang-chou, Kiangsu, a highly respected poet and artist, noted especially for orchid painting; he excelled in the Ouyang style standard script and the cursive-script styles of Wang Hsi-chih and Wang Hsien-chih. Wang Chung-min made this assertion based on a comparison of the calligraphy in this book with that in Shen Chou's (1427-1509) literary anthology, *Shen Shih-t'ien chi*, which was known to be cut from Ch'en Yüan-shu's handwriting.

Many such *hsieh-k'o* books were printed in Ming times, especially so at the end of the Ming, with calligraphy done by both well-known and unknown artist-calligraphers. These books demonstrate the new importance calligraphy had gained in later Ming printing. This new importance, revealing a new artistic taste of later Ming literati, however, can be seen even more clearly in the "autograph" prefaces that appear almost routinely in later Ming books. Examples of such prefaces in stylistic calligraphy are shown in the rest of this section.

In the opening page of the collection of letters *Chien-yüan t'ang chi-hsüan ming-kung ssu-lin chin-sheng*, written in archaic parallel-prose style by Ming writers, a famous late Ming essayist and literary critic, T'an Yüan-ch'un, is given as editor; the equally famous scholar and political activist Chang P'u (1602-1641) as associate editor; and two noted men of letters, Ma Shih-ch'i (died 1644) and Yang T'ing-lin, as commentator and collator, respectively. These well-known figures, however, may not really be responsible for the work. Instead, it is more likely that their names were used by unscrupulous book printers for commercial profit. In all likelihood, T'an Yüan-ch'un and Chang P'u were only assumed names. The letters in this collection are annotated; comments on them appear on the top margin of the folios, outside of the blocks. The book itself is extremely rare; it is mentioned neither in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao* nor in the catalogue of major libraries of rare Chinese books.<sup>2</sup>

Chang Pi's and Chang P'u's prefaces are not dated. But beside the styles of woodblock and characters (see no. 91a), there is other historical evidence of the date. Ma Shih-ch'i, Chang P'u, and Yang T'ing-lin



90. *Wang Wen-k'o kung chi*. 21 ch. (5 vols.) extant.

Author: Wang Ao (1450-1524).

Date: ca. 1599 (Soochow).

Dimensions: 9 cols. of 21 chars.; block, 21.9 x 13.5 cm.

Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

achieved great successes in the civil examinations, suggesting the book's appearance shortly after receiving in 1631 their *chin-shih* degrees, a most appropriate time to add prestige and appeal to the book.

The author of the preface illustrated (no. 91b) was not the noted official and acclaimed poet-calligrapher Chang Pi of the second half of the fifteenth century, but a later person of the same name, someone who does not appear in the indexes to Ming biographies. The calligraphy of this preface, as shown by the line bearing the author's signature, was also done by this Chang Pi. His brushwork was but a feeble touch of *pa-fen* form, historically a widely practiced variant of clerical script (see no.



91a-b. *Chien-yüan t'ang chi-hsüan ming-kung ssu-liu chin-sheng*. 10 ch. (10 vols.).

Author: attr. T'an Yüan-ch'un (1585-1687), ed.

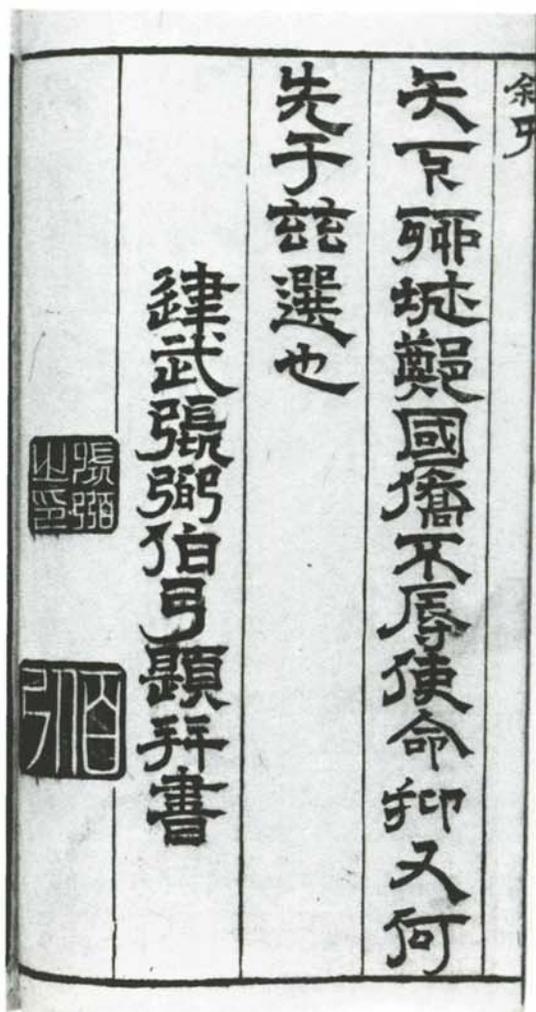
Calligrapher: Chang Pi, preface.

Date: 1631-1644.

Dimensions: 9 cols. of 21 chars.; block, 19.6 x 11.5 cm.

Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

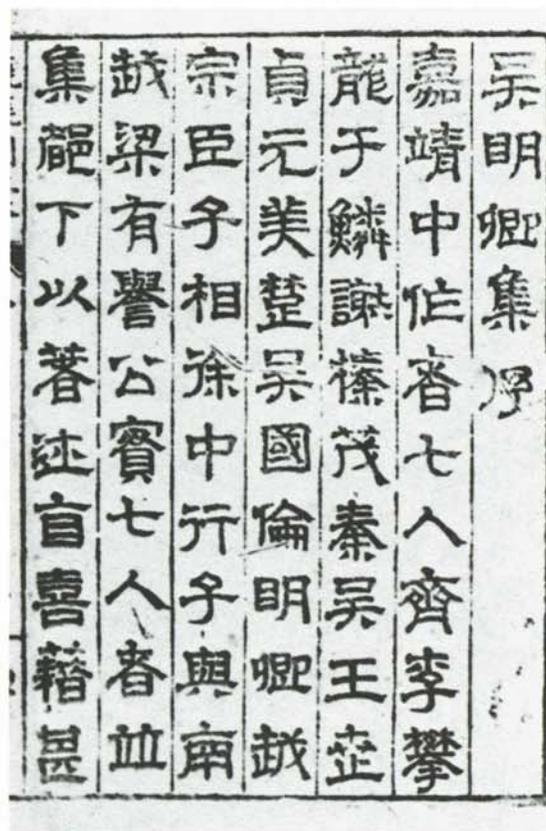
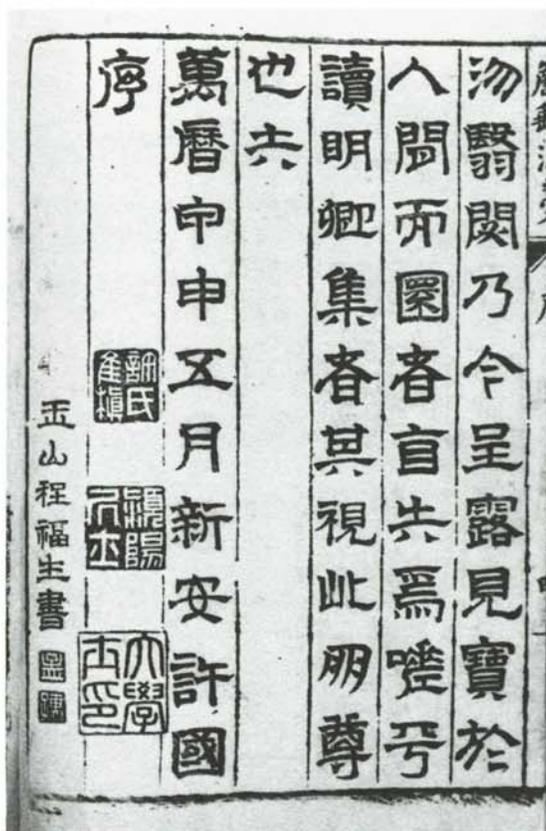
6). The calligraphy of this autograph preface was presented mainly as art, since the book did not depend on the calligrapher's fame. The style, however, enjoyed a certain degree of popularity during late



91b.

Ming; other prefaces can be found employing it.

The 54-*chüan* edition of *Tan-sui-tung kao* shown here (nos. 92a-b) is the earliest printed version of the poems and belle-lettres of Wu Kuo-lun, famous poet and essayist from Hsin-kuo chou, Hu-kuang. Wu was one of the "later seven masters" of the second half of the sixteenth century, but outlived the other six to be a famous contemporary not only of Wang Shih-chen (1526-1590) and Li P'an-lung (1514-1570), but also of the younger Li Wei-chen (1547-1626) and Wang Tao-k'un (1525-



92a-b. *Tan-sui-tung kao*. 54 ch. (32 vols.).

Author: Wu Kuo-lun (1524-1593).

Date: 1584 (Wu-ch'ang).

Dimensions: 10 cols. of 20 chars.; block, 20.1 x 13.9 cm.

Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

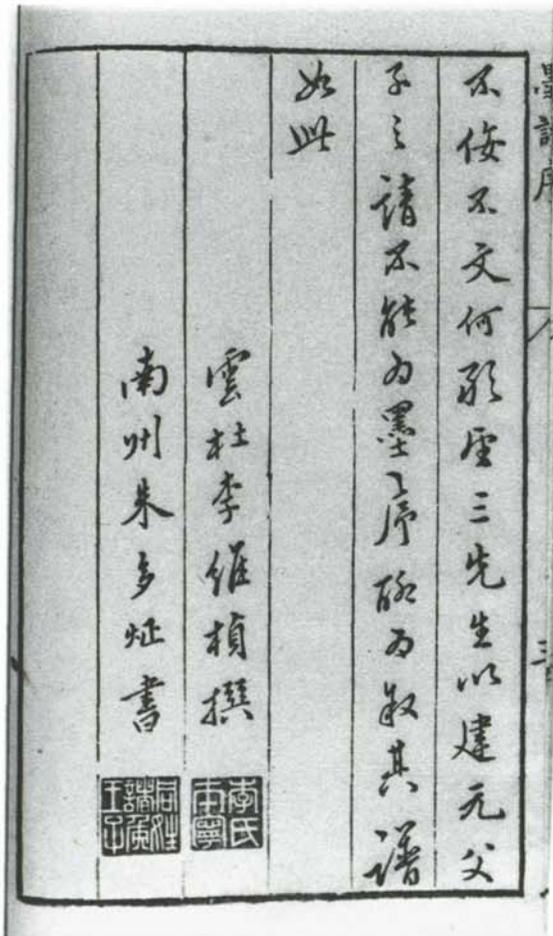
1593). *Tan-sui-tung* were the hollows in the artificial ranges Wu built in the center of an artificial pond in his native place, where he entertained himself and his friends.

The present version was edited by Wu himself and printed by the Wu family. A later, expanded, version was edited and printed in 1603 (with 27 additional *chüan*) by his son Shih-liang; it exists in a number of extant copies. But the earlier edition is known only by the Gest copy and the cop-

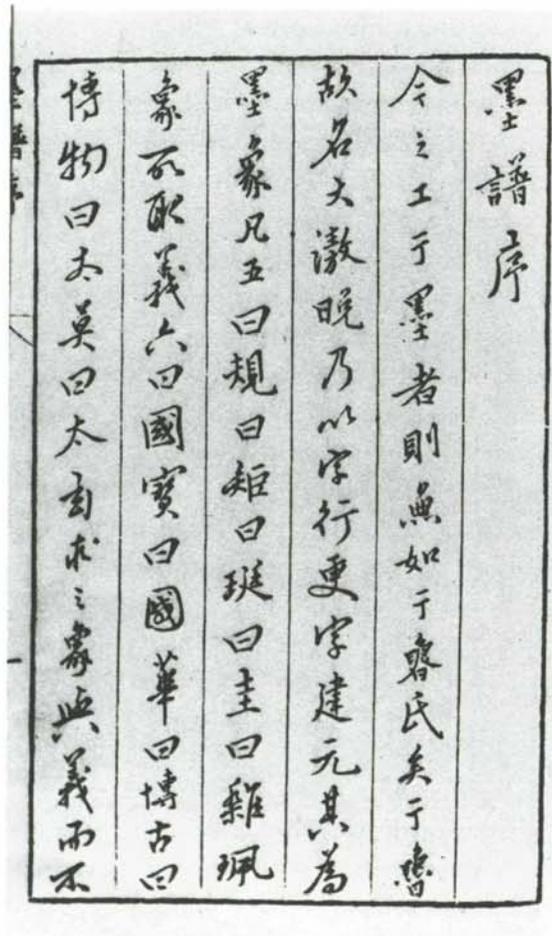
92a.

ies in Academia Sinica (Taiwan) and the Peking Library.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to prefaces both dated 1584 by Hsü Kuo (1527-1596) and Wang Shih-chen, there are three others dated 1572, 1573, and 1583. Note that Hsü Kuo's preface (no. 92a) bears the title "The works of Wu Ming-ch'ing" instead of the present title. Ming-ch'ing was Wu's alias; and use of it here suggests that the present title was decided almost at the last moment of publication. Hsü Kuo, from She-hsien in the Hui-chou area, was at the time a grand secretary, as the lowermost of his three square seals indicates. His status and his busy engagements, if not official duties, caused him to have a professional artist, a certain Ch'eng Fu-shan, perform the calligraphy. Ch'eng probably was also from



93a-b. *Fang-shih mo-p'u*. (See no. 73.)



93a.

Hui-chou, and may have been Hsü's personal secretary or a scribe in the Grand Secretariat. Whether it was Hsü Kuo's honesty or his intention to promote Ch'eng as a calligrapher, the inscription of Ch'eng's name (see no. 92b, last col.) points to the importance of calligraphy in printed books. Such collaboration between noted authors and artists was common in late Ming times.

The prefaces to *Fang-shih mo-p'u*,<sup>4</sup> a famous and beautifully executed book (discussed above), are again an example of collaboration between writer and calligrapher. The distinctive feature in this case,

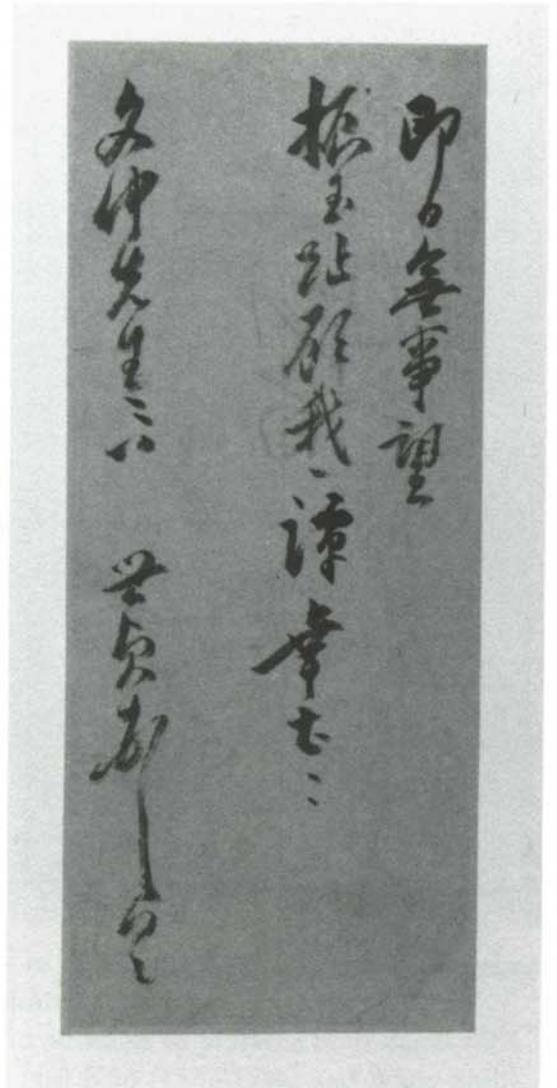
in contrast to the preceding example, is that writer and artist were each famous and accomplished in his respective field. Li Wei-ch'en (1547-1626) from Ching-shan, Hu-kuang, author of the preface illustrated (nos. 93a-b), was one of the preeminently versatile and prolific writers in the four decades bordering the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; he was as well known as Hsü Kuo. Chu To-chen (1541-1589) from Nanchang, Kiangsi, a sixth-generation descendant of Chu Ch'üan, the Prince of Ning and son of the Ming founder, was an accomplished poet and an acclaimed calligrapher and painter of nat-

ural settings. He also was a well-respected teacher, whose students privately honored him with a posthumous name. His running-cursive calligraphic style was said to have been modeled upon that of the great Mi Fu of the Sung.

The collaboration between Li and Chu was appropriate and complementary. For though Li was a great writer, he was not a good calligrapher, as he was too busy composing essays and poems to devote himself to the art of the brush. As a distinctive calligrapher, Chu's brushwork therefore added further grace to a book that has grown in artistic importance.

THE CALLIGRAPHY OF WANG  
SHIH-CHEN (1526-1590)

The letter illustrated in no. 94 is an authentic work of Wang Shih-chen and invites comparison with printed examples claiming to be cut from Wang's calligraphy. Notice the signature of Lo Wen-jui at the end of the preface to *Tan-sui-tung kao* (no. 95a) identifying Wang as the author but not calligrapher. But two other pieces of calligraphy bearing Wang's signature present further problems of authenticity. Of the two, the one from *Fang-shih mo-p'u* (no. 96) seems to be authentic first of all because the book's date falls within Wang's active literary period, and more so because of the book's calligraphic emphasis. (See nos. 73a-b and 93a-b.) The calligraphic style of the preface is similar to that in the letter, however slight the similarity might be. Even the seal inscribed "Wu-hu chang" (Master of the Five Lakes) appears to be close to the one in no. 95a (bottommost of the two large seals). However, it is important to note that, contrary to expectations, this writing is



94. Letter by Wang Shih-chen.

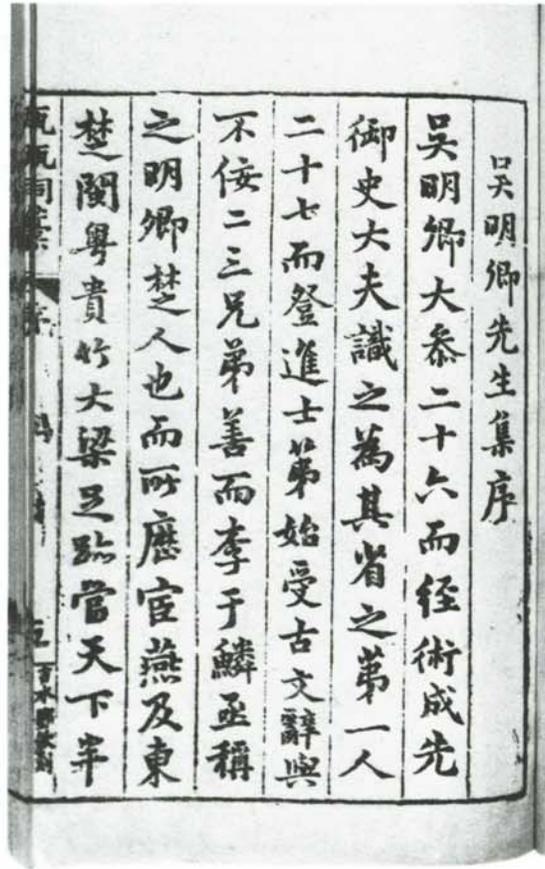
Date: unknown.

Dimensions: 24.6 x 10.2 cm.

Collection: The Art Museum, Princeton University.

not found in Wang's 180-*chüan* literary anthology *Yen-chou shan-jen ssu-pu kao*, or in its 297-*chüan* sequel. And there also appear to be no other items written for Fang in these two anthologies. These points arouse suspicion, but are not conclusive.

On the other hand, the preface to *San-Su wen-fan* (nos. 97a-b) is clearly a false



95a-b. *Tan-sui-tung kao*. (See no. 92.)

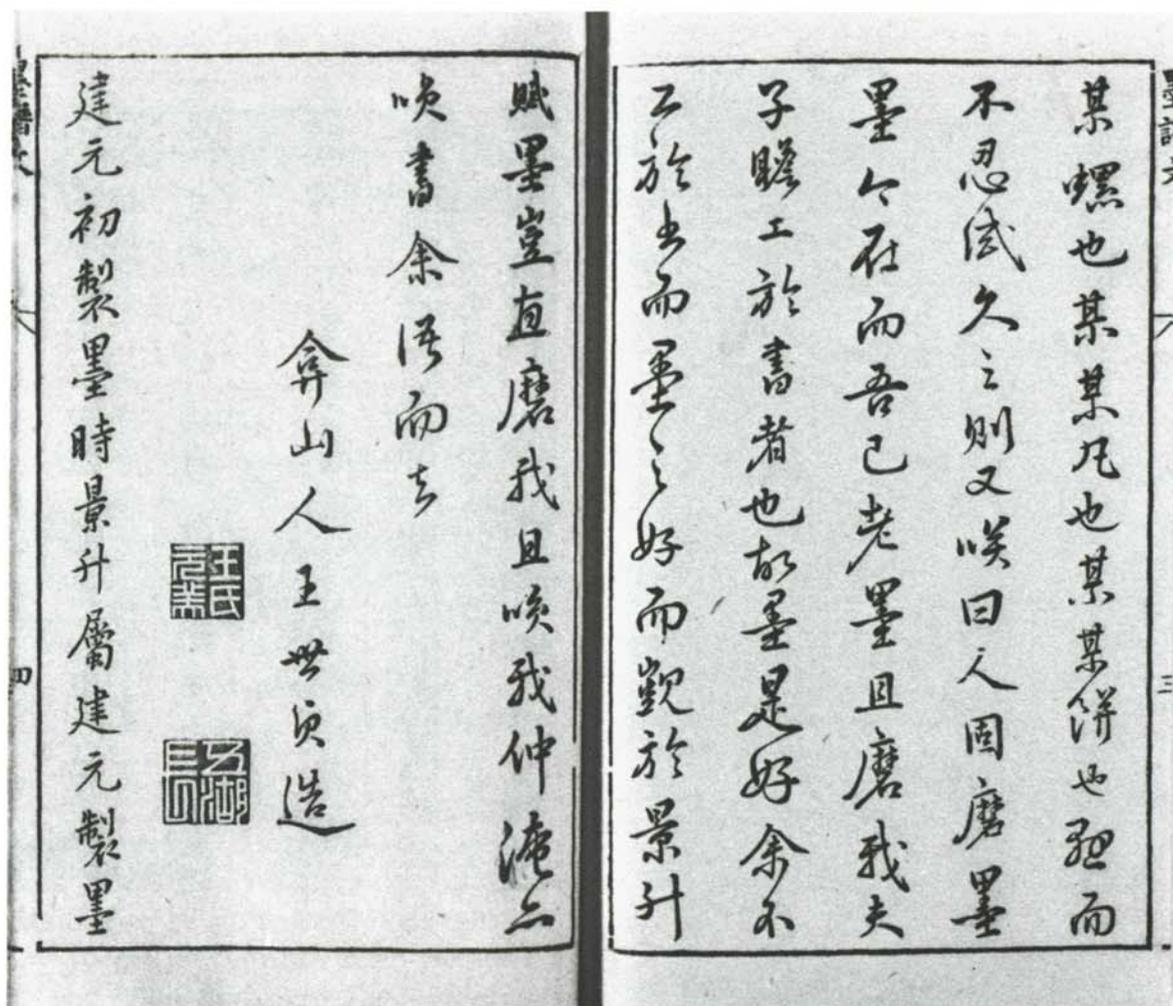
95b.

attribution, both in its content and in the calligraphy. Wang might have possessed the skill to execute this ornate and lively style. But the book itself both causes suspicion and provides clues to support them. Yang Shen's name as compiler has been shown to be false by scholars, and the essays included are useful only for the civil service examinations (typical of commercial printers' fraudulent products). The book bears four prefaces: the first by Ch'en Yüan-shu (fl. 1600-1630) is dated 1622; the other three, by Yüan Tsung-tao (1560-1600), Yang T'ing-ho (1459-1529), and Wang Shih-chen, are all undated. In fact, only the preface by Ch'en Yüan-shu, the late Ming poet and artist (mentioned

earlier concerning no. 90) may be authentic. Wang's preface is not found in his collected writings, for the very good reason that it was impossible for him to have contributed it in 1622, more than three decades after his death.<sup>5</sup>

THE CALLIGRAPHY OF CHIAO HUNG  
(1541-1620)

The next "case study" involves the calligraphy by, and attributed, to Chiao Hung, the foremost scholar and writer of his time. It offers a more interesting, even somewhat surprising, glimpse into the re-

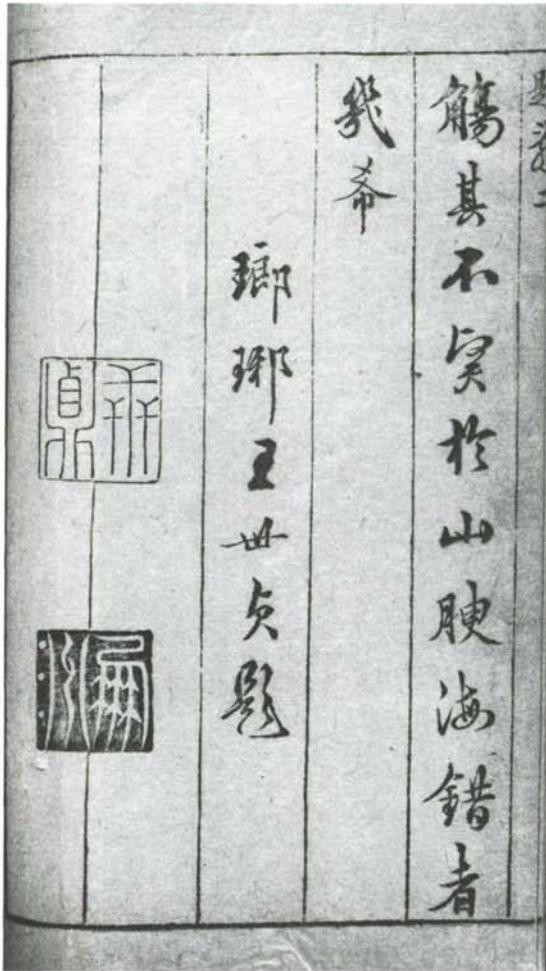


96. Fang-shih mo-p'u. (See no. 73.)

relationship between calligraphy, printing, and book marketing during Ming. A few notes on the selections themselves should be given first.<sup>6</sup>

The book *Hsü ts'ang-shu*, a biographic history of the Ming dynasty, has been traditionally attributed to Li Chih, the high-minded and controversial official, philosopher, and activist of the late sixteenth century. Because Li Chih was known as a "heretic," the book's circulation was discouraged during most of the two centuries following its publication. Recent studies, however, demonstrate that although the

book was conceived by Li Chih, Li at best contributed only a slight part: several forewords to sections, and remarks and comments to a number of biographies. Not only does Li's career not convince us that he was the author of this book, but also his literary style is incompatible with its contents. Even more striking is that a number of biographies are identified as written by Chiao Hung years after Li's death. In fact, the literary style of these biographies is more compatible with that of the other ones in the book. Recently it has been argued that Chiao Hung should have



97a-b. [*Chia-lo chai hsüan p'ing-chu*] *san Su wen-fan ch'üan-chi*. 18 ch. (16 vols.).

Author: spurious attr. Yang Shen (1488-1559).

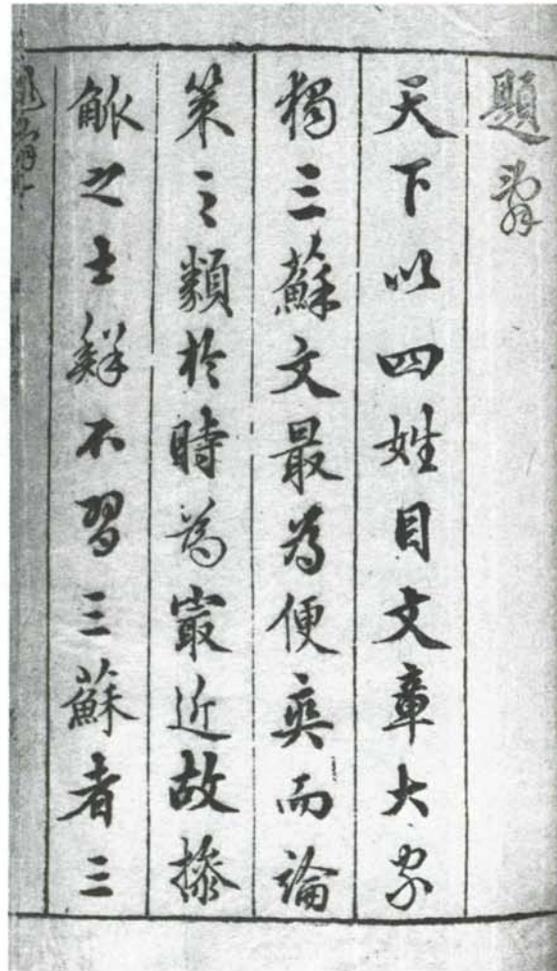
Date: 1622.

Dimensions: 9 cols. of 18 chars.; block, 19 x 12.8 cm.

Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

been recognized as de facto author, because in early Ch'ing times a book of identical content was attributed to him bearing the title *Hsi-ch'ao ming-ch'en shih-lu* (Veritable Records of Eminent Officials of the Ming Dynasty).

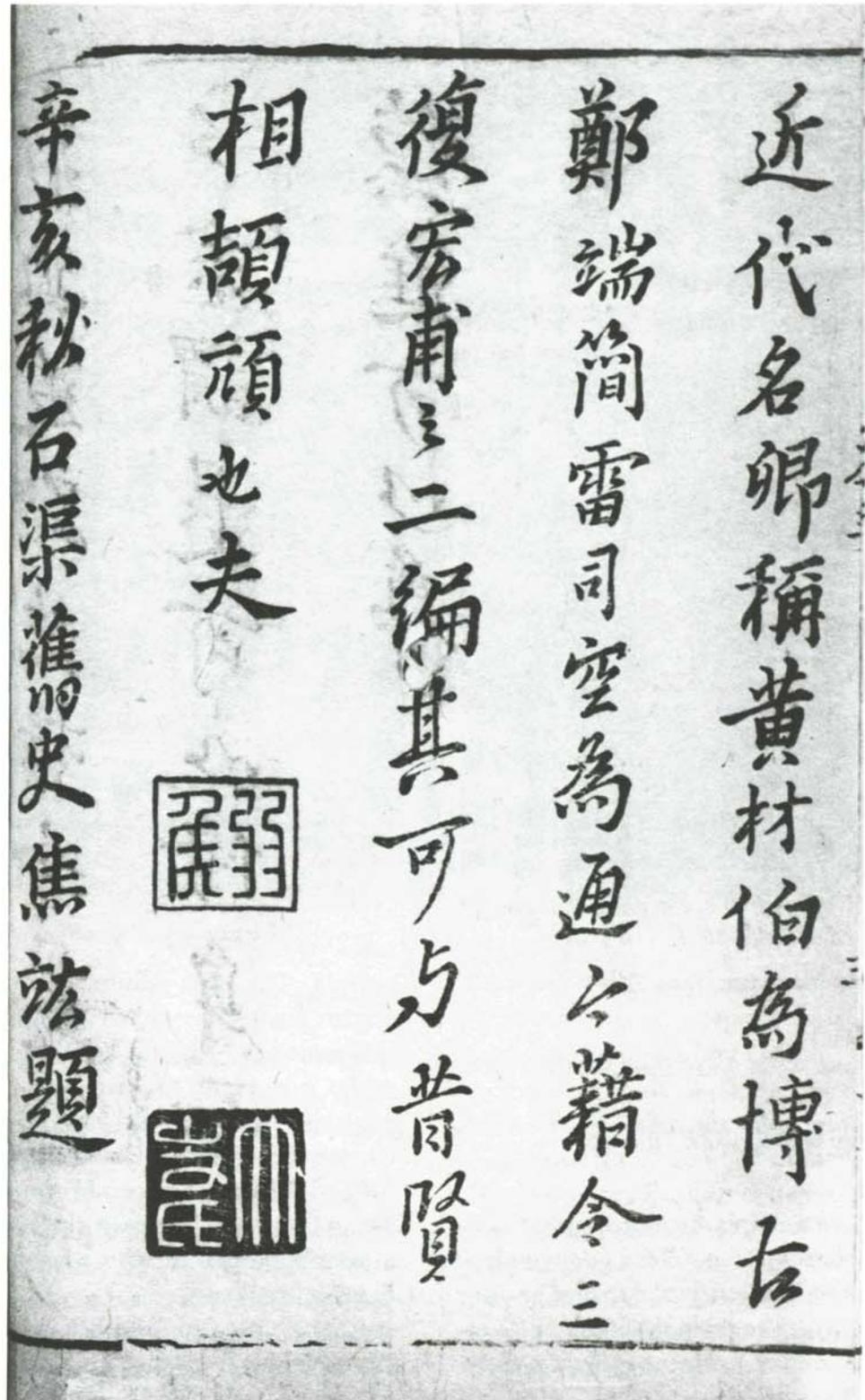
In any event, *Hsü ts'ang-shu* was first published in 1611 (some ten years after Li's death), as attested by Chiao Hung's



97a.

preface. This first edition, collated by a certain Wang Shao-ch'ien (see nos. 98a-b), was issued in Nanking by Wang Wei-yen with Chiao Hung's sponsorship. The title page bears two lines reading, "Sent to be cut by the office of Chiao [Hung]" and "Woodblocks deposited in the office of Wang [Wei-yen]," apparently having been a joint sponsorship whose finances were handled by Wang.

*Chung-yüan wen-hsien* is a collection of essays drawn from the Confucian classics, histories, and philosophic and literary works of sundry authors. It was compiled and annotated with the professed, mundane, purpose of helping students to grasp



98a-b. *Hsü ts'ang-shu*. 27 ch. (8 vols.).

Author: Li Chih (1527-1602).

Date: 1611 (Nanking).

Dimensions: 9 cols. of 20 chars.; block, 23 x 14.5 cm.

Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

續藏書序  
李宏甫藏書一編余序而傳  
之久矣而於  
國朝事未備目取余家藏名  
公事臨緒正之未統而之通州

98a.

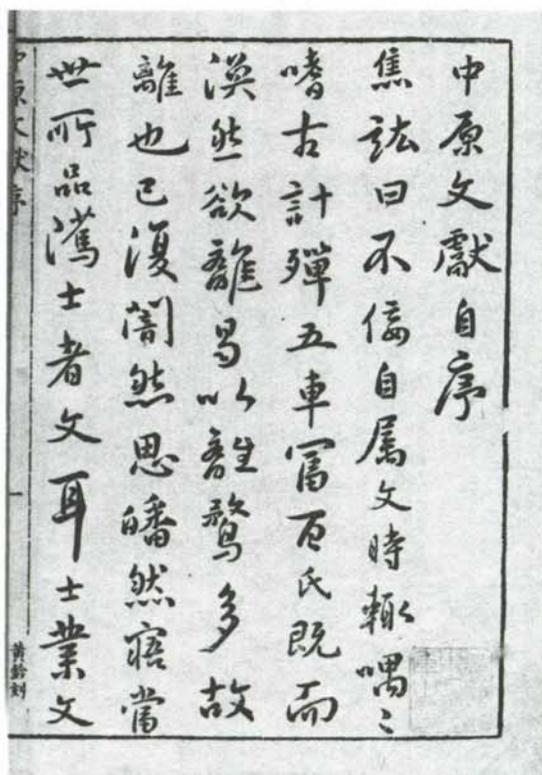
the techniques for composing the type of essays required in the civil service examinations. The compilation is attributed to Chiao Hung (*chin-shih* 1589) and the annotation to Chu Chih-fan (fl. 1590-1624, *chin-shih* 1595, both from Nanking and both having placed first in their respective palace examinations. The book also lists Hsü Kuo (1527-1596), prominently titled "Junior Guardian of the Emperor," as collator; a Hanlin compiler, T'ao Wang-lin (b. 1562), as commentator; and four students of the government school of Shehsien, three of them surnamed Wang and one Hsü, as proofreaders and publishers. In addition, a Huang Ch'ien of Shehsien was named the cutter of the blocks. Preceding the text are two prefaces with dates missing, one by Chiao Hung (nos. 99a-b) and one by T'ao Wang-lin; and a foreword by Chu Chih-fan, also undated. According to Wang Chung-min, who examined another copy held by Peking University Library, both these prefaces are dated 1596; hence the date of publication as given in the label information. But, despite the citation of these famous and influential names, the book's authorship is falsely attributed to Chiao Hung by commercial book printers, as stated both by the reviewers in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* abstracts (1787) and by Wang Chung-min (1983), who identified the compilers as the Wangs from Shehsien, Hui-chou prefecture.

*P'o-hsien chi* (nos. 100a-b) is a selection of the great Su Shih's writings. The version exhibited, with a longer title, was expanded by the editing of the celebrated Ch'en Chi-ju (1558-1639). It was based on an earlier, shorter, version in sixteen *chüan* selected by Li Chih and published by Chiao Hung in 1600, presumably in Nanking; thereafter it was cut and issued

again in Hangchow. The copy illustrated is truly rare; it is not mentioned in the catalogues of rare books, including even that of the Library of Congress, which nonetheless has two copies of the 1600 edition. This copy bears a preface by Chiao Hung, dated 1600, and another by Ch'en Chi-ju, undated. It probably was printed during the last reign of the Ming, when Ch'en was in his late years.

*K'uai-hsüeh t'ang chi* (nos. 101a-b) is the literary anthology of the noted scholar-official Feng Meng-chen from Hsiu-shui, Chekiang. Because he owned Wang Hsi-chih's famous calligraphic work, "K'uai hsüeh shih ch'eng t'ieh," Feng named his studio K'uai-hsüeh t'ang; hence also the title of his collected literary works. The present copy has five prefaces — two dated 1616, by Chiao Hung and by Ku Ch'i-yüan (1565-1628) from Nanking; one dated 1615, by Chu Chih-fan; two undated, by Li Wei-chen and by Huang Ju-heng (1558-1626) from Shan-yin, Chekiang. Based on his study of woodblock styles, an eminent bibliophile in the early Republican period, Fu Tseng-hsiang, asserts that the book was cut and published in Nanking.

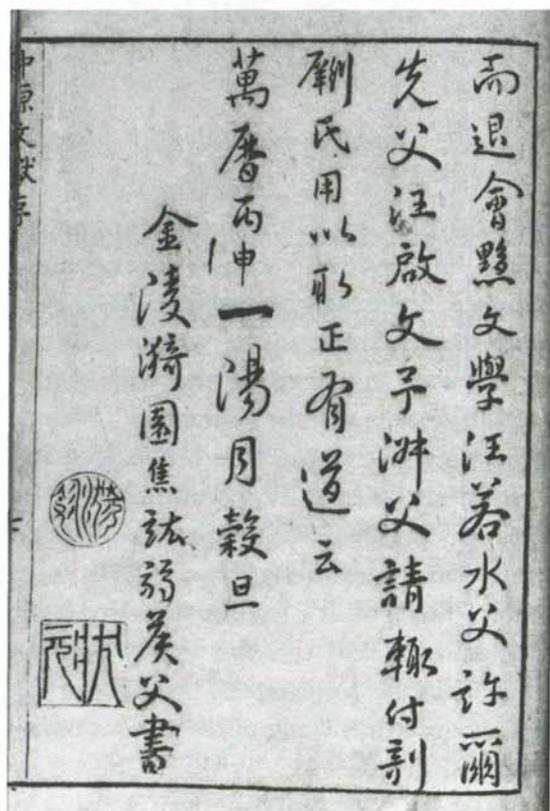
The two letters by Chiao Hung illustrated are both undated. The first (no. 102a), written to an in-law, appears to be an appeal for a reprint of Yang Shen's *Liu-shu ching-i*, a work on the structure and forms of ancient scripts. The second one (no. 102b), which may be a postscript to the first, though the slightly variant style of the calligraphy suggests a time difference, also talks about the printing business — about a facsimile reproduction of a certain piece of calligraphy. It is from these two indisputable samples of Chiao Hung's calligraphy that we proceed to investigate the authenticity of the attribu-



tions in the facsimile prefaces illustrated here.

On the basis of the calligraphy in the second letter (no. 102b), it is clear that the preface to *Hsü ts' ang-shu* is a facsimile of Chiao Hung's own handwriting. In both the composition of individual characters and the linear movements of the brush they bear close resemblance to one another. The formality in the preface, as against the letter's cursive calligraphy, is due to the nature of book prefaces. The characters of the preface were cut from tracings of the original, thus creating a sharper definition in the brushwork — in other words, inevitable distortion, however slight, due to block cutting. Chiao's close relationship with the writing and publication of this book increases the likelihood of his personally having executed the calligraphy for the preface, an act which added credibility and marketability to the book. It would follow, then, that the letter was written in Chiao's old age; the preface was autographed when Chiao was seventy years old.

The calligraphy shown in the preface to *Chung-yüan wen-hsien* (nos. 99a-b) definitely is not Chiao's, as our study showed above. Wang Chung-min also states that that could be told at a single glance. Not that it was impossible for Chiao to master a calligraphic style like the one displayed



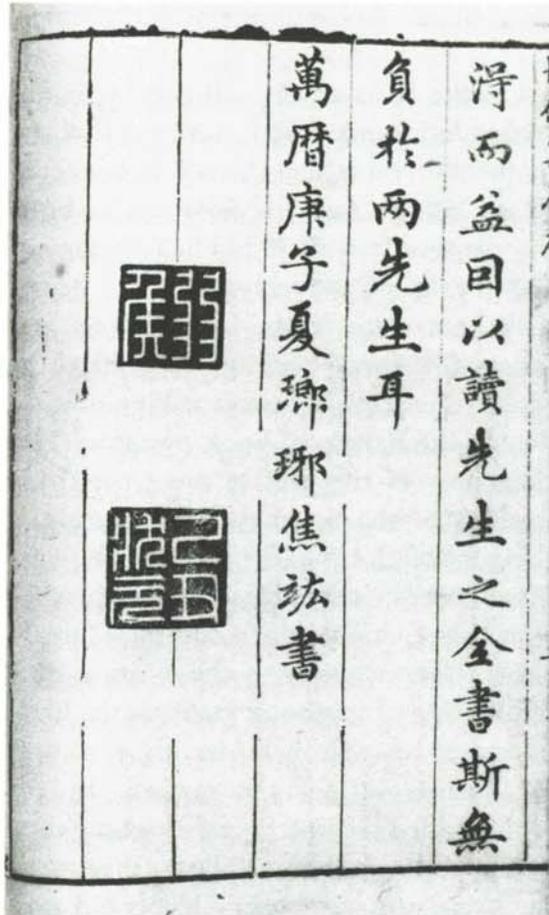
99a-b. *Hsin-chüan Chiao t'ai-shih lei-hsüan chung-yüan wen-hsien*. 24 ch. (16 vols.).

Author: attr. Chiao Hung, comp.

Date: 1596 (She-hsien?, Anhwei).

Dimensions: 10 cols. of 21 chars.; block, 20.5 x 13.5 cm.

99b. Collection: Gest Oriental Library.



100a-b. *Ch'en Mei-kung ting-pu P'o-hsien chi*. 38 ch. (20 vols.).

Author: Su Shih (1036-1101).

Date: 1620-1630s.

Dimensions: 10 cols. of 20 chars.; block, 21.3 x 13.6 cm.

Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

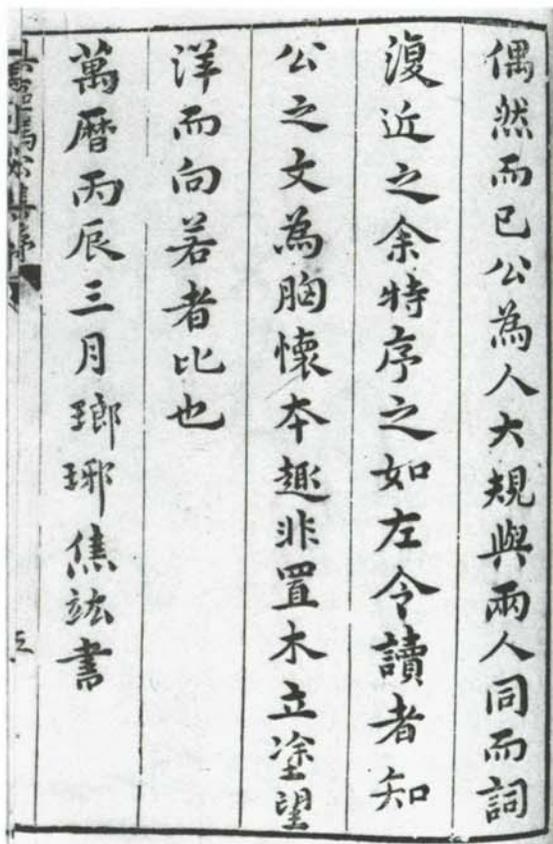
in the preface, which is beautifully punctuated by a lively maneuvered brush; Chiao especially could have done it when he was younger, fifty-five years old according to the date of the preface. The fact remains, however, that the preface is not to be found in Chiao's literary collections. And more revealing is that the preface calligraphy is strikingly similar to that at-



100a.

tributed to Chu Chih-fan, as found in Chu's "Foreword" to the same book, which is illustrated below (no. 104). Another doubt comes in the wording of the second seal inscribed at the end of the preface. In this seal the characters "*chuang-yüan*" (*optimus* in the triennial palace examination) are inscribed prominently (no. 99b, bottom seal). Although Chiao was an *optimus* in the examination of 1589, years before the publication of the book, it seems more likely that the words were inscribed on the commercial instincts of the book printer, thinking of his market of future examinees.

Again, the calligraphy of the prefaces to *P'o-hsien chi* and *K'uai-hsüeh t'ang chi* can-



101a-b. *K'uai-hsüeh t'ang chi*. 64 ch. (36 vols.).

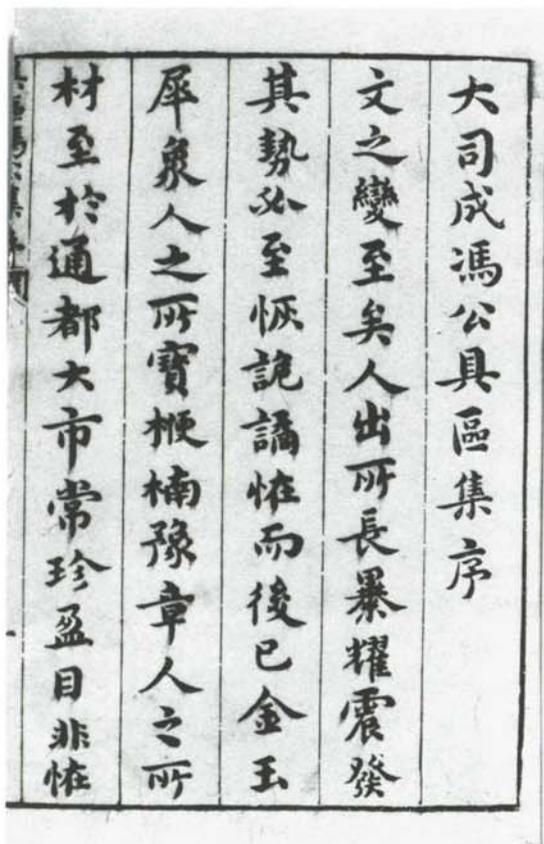
Author: Feng Meng-chen (1546-1605).

Date: 1616 (Nanking).

Dimensions: 9 cols. of 18 chars.; block, 20.3 x 13.5 cm.

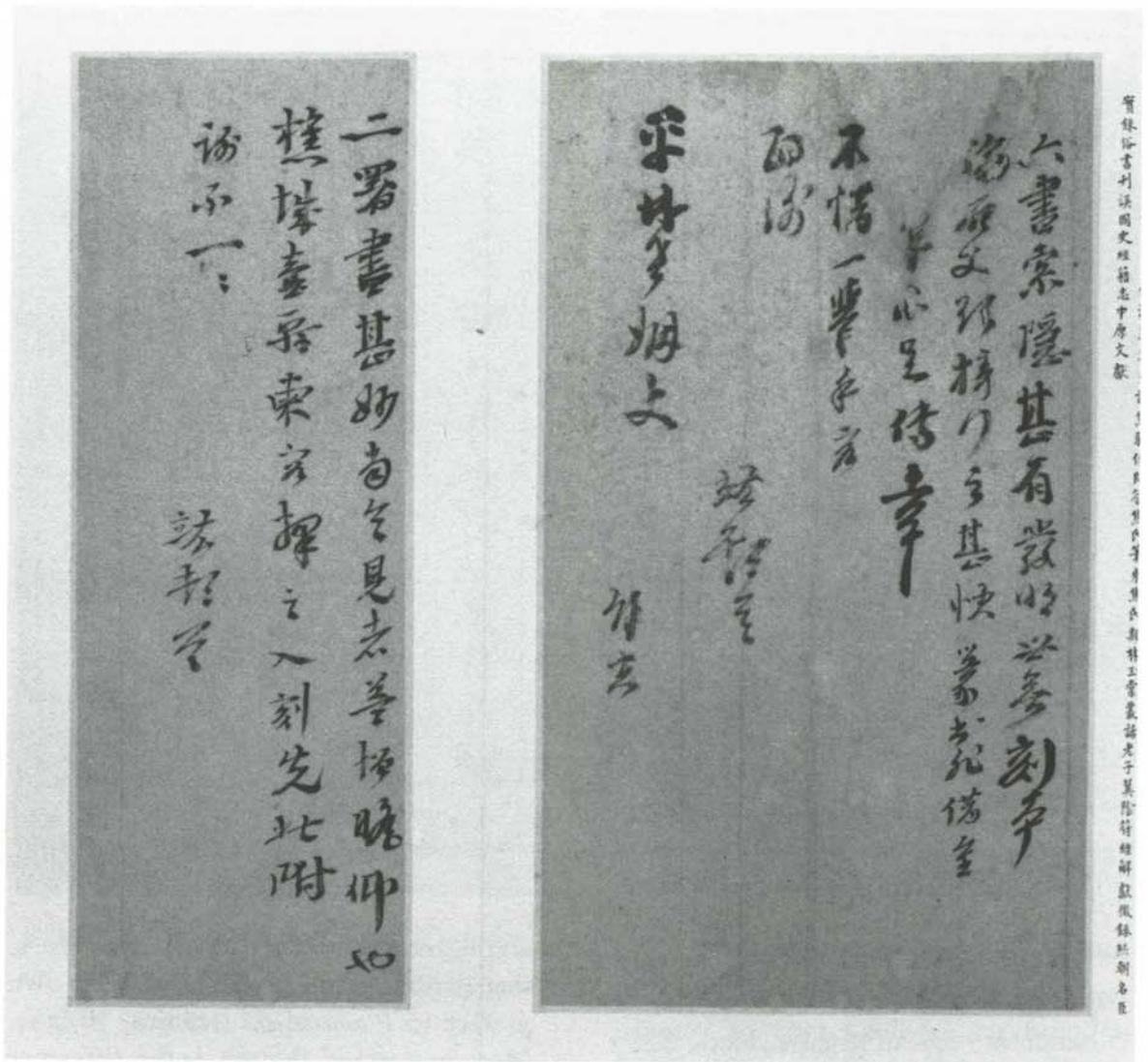
Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

not be easily authenticated. First, these prefaces are not found in Chiao's published literary anthologies. This means that at best Chiao did not like them, if indeed he was their author. In the case of *P'o-hsien chi*, though the first seal at the end of the preface (no. 100b) appears to be similar to that in the *Hsü ts'ang-shu* preface, the second one is suspected of being commercially oriented advertisement by the printer. In fact, the calligraphy in gen-



101a.

eral bears resemblance to someone else's, that attributed to Ch'en Chi-ju in his own preface to *P'o-hsien chi* (see nos. 107a-b). More important, though, is the difference between the calligraphy of the *P'o-hsien chi* preface dated 1600 (nos. 100a-b), and that of the preface to *K'uai-hsüeh t'ang chi*, dated 1616 (nos. 101a-b). It may of course be noted that these two prefaces were written over a span of sixteen years, thereby suggesting the possibility of a change in style. But then it is unlikely that at the advanced age of seventy-five Chiao Hung would inscribe the ornate calligraphy that appears in the latter preface. Besides, the two seals used there, with texts similar to those found in *Hsü ts'ang-shu*, nonetheless are different both in size and in calligraphy. Interestingly, the folio on



102a-b. Letters by Chiao Hung.

102a.

Date: unknown.

Dimensions: a) 27.3 x 15.4 cm; b) 27 x 9.4 cm.

Collection: The Art Museum, Princeton University.

which these seal inscriptions are located has the portion after these inscriptions cut off — for reasons on which it would not be wise to speculate — so that if any other calligrapher's name originally appeared there as scribe it remains unknown. This point is worth noting because a preface

discussed below, text written by Li Wei-chen with his seals duly appearing (no. 106b), is in a calligraphic style somewhat similar to that of Chiao's *K'uai-hsüeh t'ang chi* preface; but there the name of the scribe, "Hsü Yen-tsu of Mo-ling [Nanking]" is given at the end of the folio (no. 106a). This suggests that the facsimile-cut calligraphy of all the prefaces may have been written by Hsü Yen-tsu or other scribes.

One must therefore concede the diffi-

culty in identifying the writer of such facsimiles, and be cautioned that a variety of reasons may underline any (seemingly) deliberate false attribution.

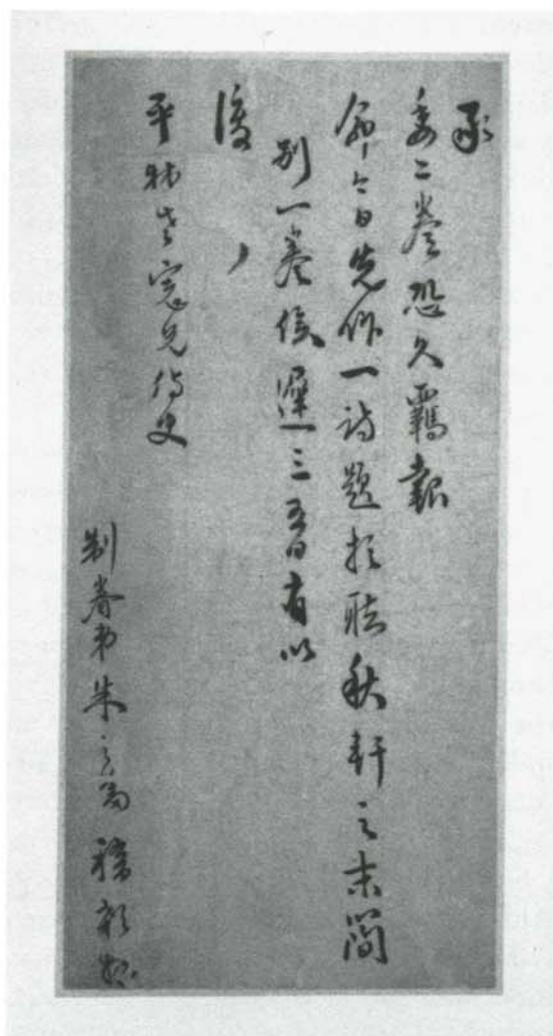
THE CALLIGRAPHY OF  
CHU CHIH-FAN  
(FL. 1590-1624)

We have included a letter and three prefaces attributed to Chu Chih-fan, but we must first mention something about him.<sup>7</sup> Chu, Chiao Hung, and Ku Ch'i-yüan (1565-1628) were three of the most eminent figures of the Nanking area at the end of the sixteenth century. All from the city of Nanking, intimate friends of one another, and foremost literati of their region, they passed their court examinations with highest rankings: Chiao and Chu placed first in the palace examinations of 1589 and 1595, respectively, and Ku placed third in 1598, but had been first in the metropolitan examination the year before. This made them legendary Nanking characters about whom the city was fond of boasting. Their fame added greatly to their reputations as writers; many of their works were regarded as model writing for examination purposes. Many extant books on various subjects bear their names as authors, editors, compilers, commentators, proofreaders, and sponsors of publication — evidence that their names were worth citing and hence profitably used by commercial printers. Chu Chih-fan accomplished less as a versatile scholar and prolific writer than did Chiao Hung and Ku Ch'i-yüan. He, however, excelled them as artist, being especially a recognized painter and calligrapher, and collector of antique objects. His poetry is not outstanding, but his calligraphy was so widely appealing, that as an imperial

envoy to Korea he was busily solicited by the Koreans for his autographed poems. To such requests he consented gracefully, giving them his works while declining their lavish presents. He ended his official career sooner than most other officials of his background, retiring in the capacity of vice-minister of Personnel. Like Chiao and Ku, he returned to Nanking and became active in the highest local artistic circles.

The letter illustrated (no. 103) was written to a certain in-law and former fellow student, as the term "*ch'uang-yu*" (friend studying under the same window) was used to address his correspondent, and in turn Chu was called "*chüan-ti*" (younger brother by marriage). This friend, having the courtesy name P'ing-lin, was also an in-law of Chiao Hung; he was so addressed in one of Chiao's letters (no. 102a), illustrated above. This letter is Chu's response to a request for his poetry. Although it is undated, it was written either in 1597-1598 when Chu was mourning his father, Chu I (1533-1597), or in 1613-1614 when he was mourning his mother, nee Chou (1536-1613); the word "*chih*" (observing mourning obligations) is evidence of this. Chu's father was not a *chin-shih*, but did pass the provincial examination in 1564, together with Chiao Hung, whom Chu elsewhere therefore addressed as *nien-po* ("uncle"). Ku Ch'i-yüan was even closer to the Chu family; he was the author of the tomb inscription of Chu's mother.

The calligraphy displayed in this letter tends to make one doubt the claim that Chu Chih-fan was an accomplished calligrapher. It should be borne in mind, however, that this was just a quick reply to an intimate friend and relative and was written during the mourning period, a time



103. Letter by Chu Chih-fan.

Date: unknown.

Dimensions: 26.6 x 12.6. cm.

Collection: The Art Museum, Princeton University.

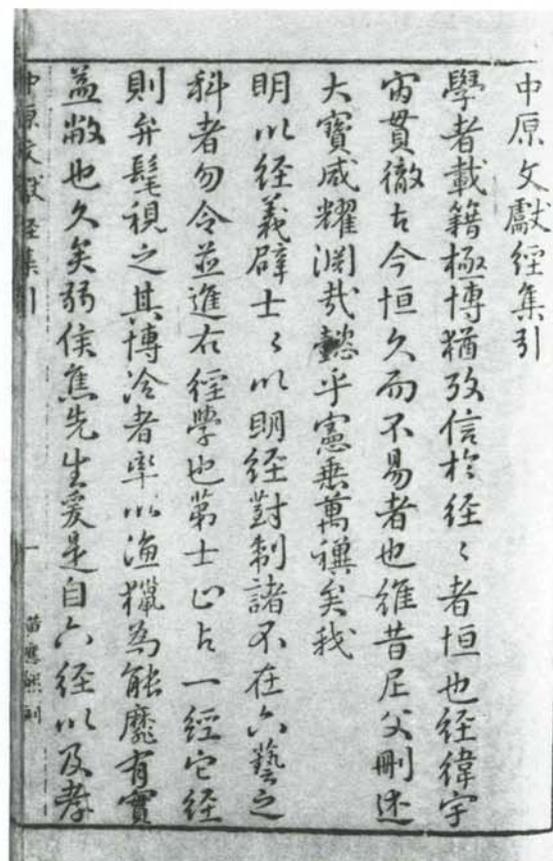
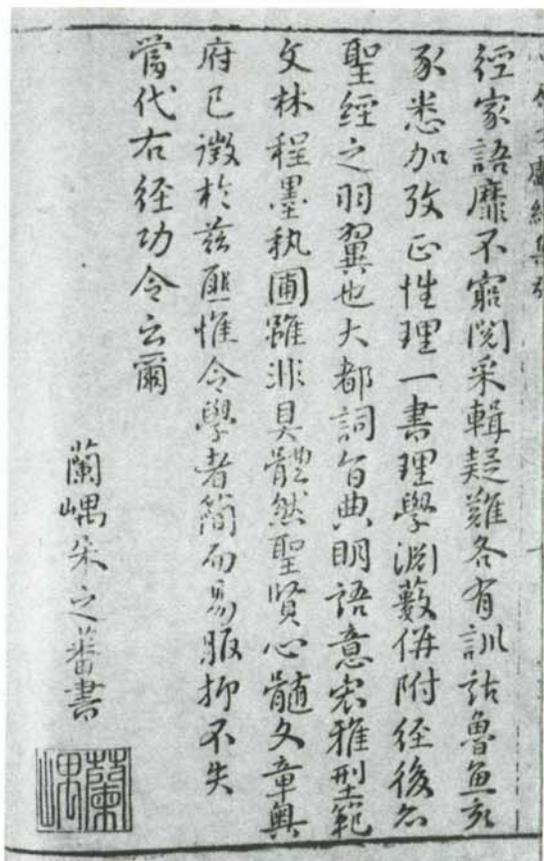
when one was not supposed to do things ornately and elaborately.

Turning to the other three examples, one finds strikingly different calligraphic styles and wide possibilities for ascribing the artist. It is conceivable that Chu, as a noted calligrapher, could have mastered many styles and executed them beautifully. But the fact that *Chung-yüan wen-*

*hsien* was falsely attributed by She-hsien literati to Chiao Hung and to Chu, as annotator, makes it unreasonable to assume that the "Foreword" illustrated (nos. 104a-b) was composed and autographed by Chu. That its calligraphy bears close resemblance to that of Chiao Hung's preface, as mentioned before, further urges one to consider Chu either as the calligrapher of both prefaces or of neither. But since Chiao was in fact not the compiler, Chu's closeness to Chiao greatly narrows the probability that he was in any way associated with the book.

The preface to *Nan-yu kao* (nos. 105a-b) is highly suspect. One doubts Chu's inclination to write in this highly artistic but uncharacteristic style at an advanced age: The "Preface" was dated 1621. The text of the preface is equally suspect. The book's author, Ch'en Chao-chi from P'u-t'ien, Fukien, was an obscure figure, having left no record of his examination success or official career. (The preface hints that he may have been a secretary in the military.) It was then socially most inappropriate and unconventional, given Chu's senior age and official status, for Chu to address himself as the "friend" of the author and as a *sheng*, an expression almost only used by a young literatus not yet having substantial success. On the other hand, if by contributing a preface Chu actually meant to lend prestige to an obscure friend, he would have done better to enumerate at least some of his prestigious official titles.

Only the preface to *K'uai-hsüeh t'ang chi* (nos. 106a-b) seems to bear Chu's writing — and this for one important reason: consistency. That very style of calligraphy, showing an imitation of Yen Chen-ch'ing, with typically thick strokes and smoothly forceful brush endings, can be found in prefaces signed by Chu for other



104a-b. Hsin-chüan Chiao t'ai-shih hui-hsüan chung-yüan wen-hsien. (See no. 99.)

104a.

books. Besides, it was appropriate in this particular case for Chu to present the preface with his own brush: he was writing it as a tribute to his eminent late teacher.

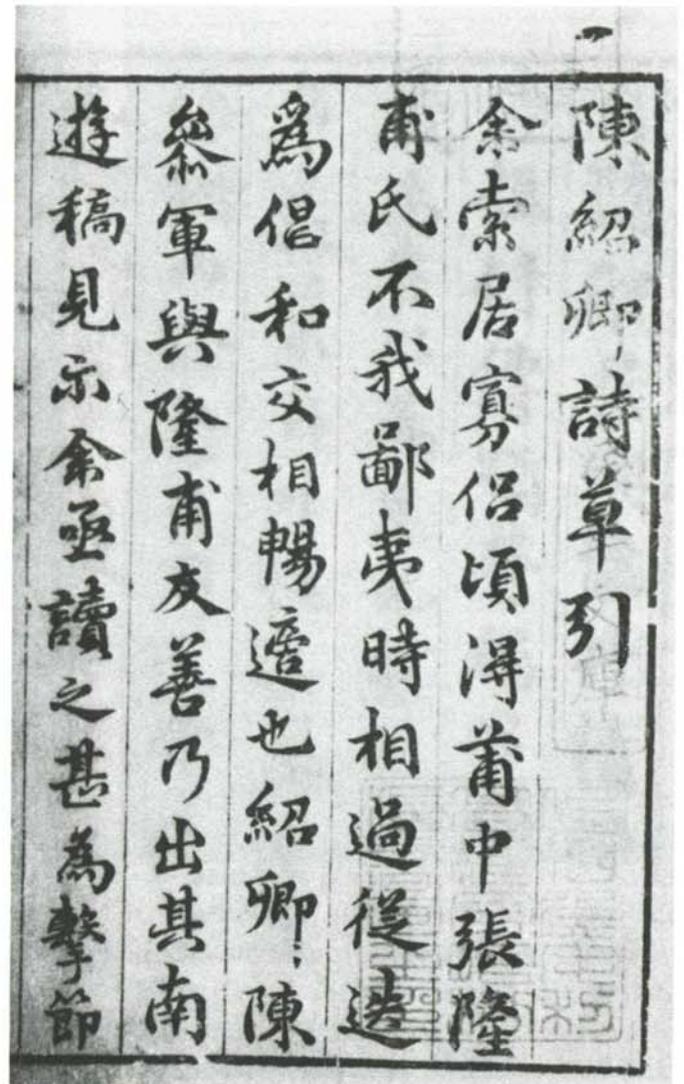
Thus here again, in this case study of Chu Chih-fan's calligraphy, both spurious and genuine, we see that importance was attached to the personalizing presence of fine calligraphy in the late Ming printed book.

THE CALLIGRAPHY OF CH'EN CHI-JU  
(1558-1639)

Another set of intriguing examples demonstrates commercial printers' use of stylistic calligraphy and celebrity-auto-

graphed calligraphy to lend appeal to their products. Featured here is Ch'en Chi-ju of Hua-t'ing, Kiangsu,<sup>8</sup> celebrated private scholar, writer, calligrapher, painter, esoteric hermit in the mountain, and otherwise charming man of the world, who frequented the mansions of such high officials and renowned artists as Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1556-1637).

We have already introduced *P'o-hsien chi*, the editorship of which was ascribed to Ch'en Chi-ju, and discussed why Chiao Hung probably was not the calligrapher of an early preface. The calligraphy displayed in Chiao's preface bears resemblance to Ch'en's, in the preface illustrated (nos. 107a-b); in fact, they appear to be



105a-b. *Nan-yu kao*. 1 vol.

Author: Ch'en Chao-chi (fl. 1620s).

Date: 1623.

Dimensions: 8 cols. of 18 chars.

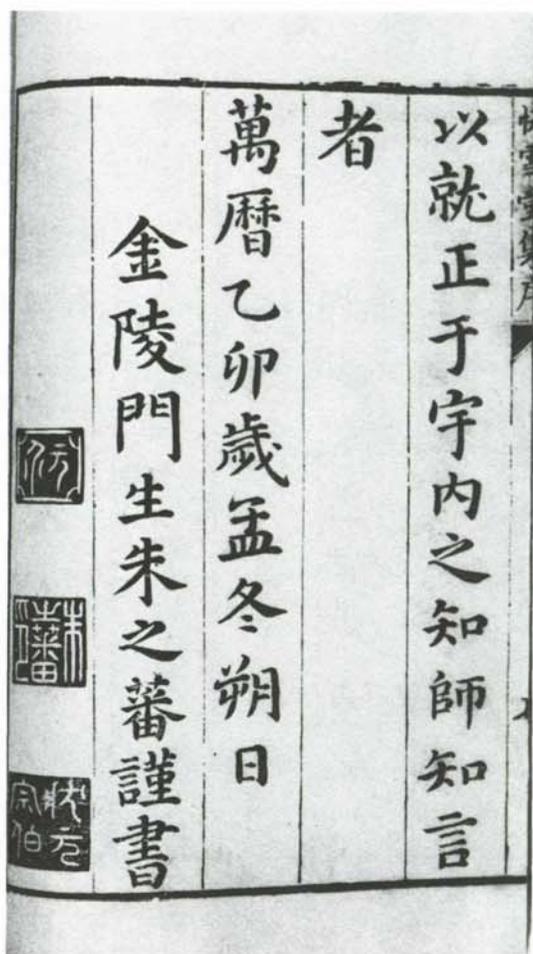
Source: photographic copy of Ming printed original in Naikaku Bunko.

wrought by the same hand. Note that Ch'en's preface, characteristically for false attributions, lacks a date. As a matter of fact, neither this preface, nor the other two illustrated, is found in the most reliable collection of Ch'en's literary writings,

105a.

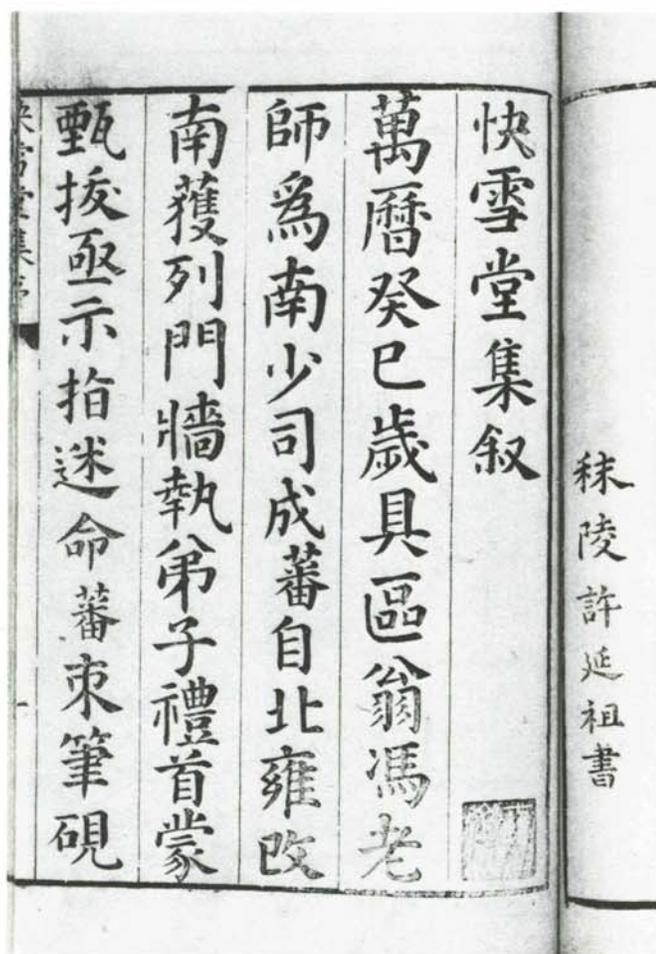
the 24-*chüan* *Pai-shih ch'iao chen-kao*, prefaced by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and published by Chiang T'ai-ting in Hua-t'ing in 1636, a date late enough to have all these prefaces included if they were indeed written by Ch'en. Ch'en thus was not the calligrapher for "his" preface to *P'o-hsien chi*.

Both *Su-wen hui-ching*, a collection of 108 essays by Su Shih (selection attributed to Li T'ing-chi, well-known literatus and grand secretary from Chin-chiang, Fu-kien, and with commentary by him as well as by Ch'en Chi-ju), and *Li-tai ming-*



106a-b. *K'uai-hsüeh t'ang chi*. (See no. 101.)

*wen tse*, a collection of essays by writers from the pre-Ch'in era through the Sung dynasty whose compilation is ascribed to a certain Hsü I from Fukien and commented on by Ch'en Chi-ju, are extremely rare books. Both were printed with commentary atop the text, and were produced in Shu-lin, Chien-yang, the Ming center of book printing in Fukien. The former was cut and printed by the Shih-chien t'ang, the latter by the Chih-shan t'ang of the Ch'en family. They were commercially printed and unscholarly, and thus not reviewed in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu t'i-yao*. With good evi-



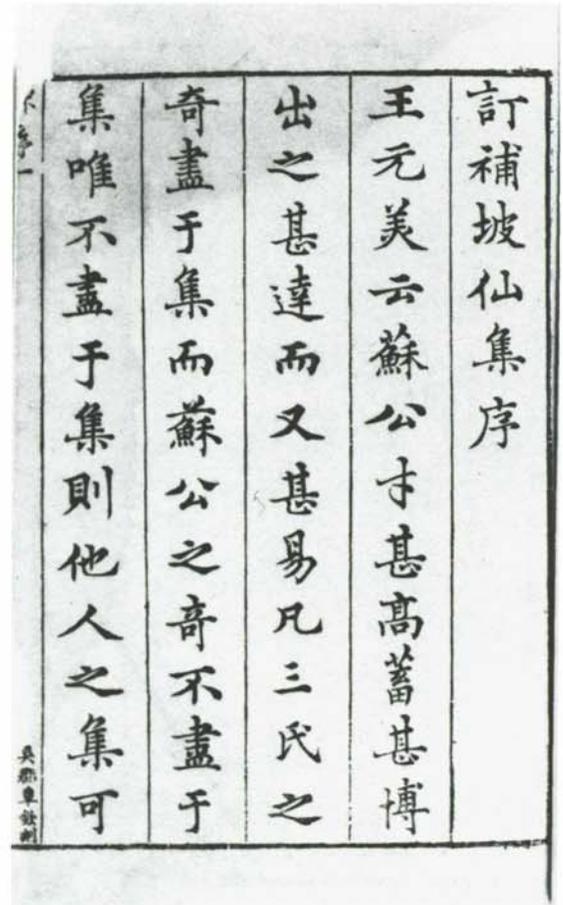
106a.

dence, Ch'ü Wan-li noted that the editorship of *Su-wen hui-ching* (nos. 108a-b) was falsely attributed to Li T'ing-chi, and with keen perception he noted that Ch'en's preface was also a false attribution. In all likelihood the printer made such attributions; and again, Ch'en's preface is undated. As for the dated preface in *Li-tai ming-wen tse*, a calligrapher's signature states the artist to be a certain Yeh Yeh-ch'iu (nos. 109a-b; the signature constitutes the last column of b).

The resemblance between the last two samples of printed calligraphy and that in the two Ch'en letters illustrated here is



107a-b. Ch'en Mei-kung ting-pu P'o-hsien chi. (See nos. 100a-b.)

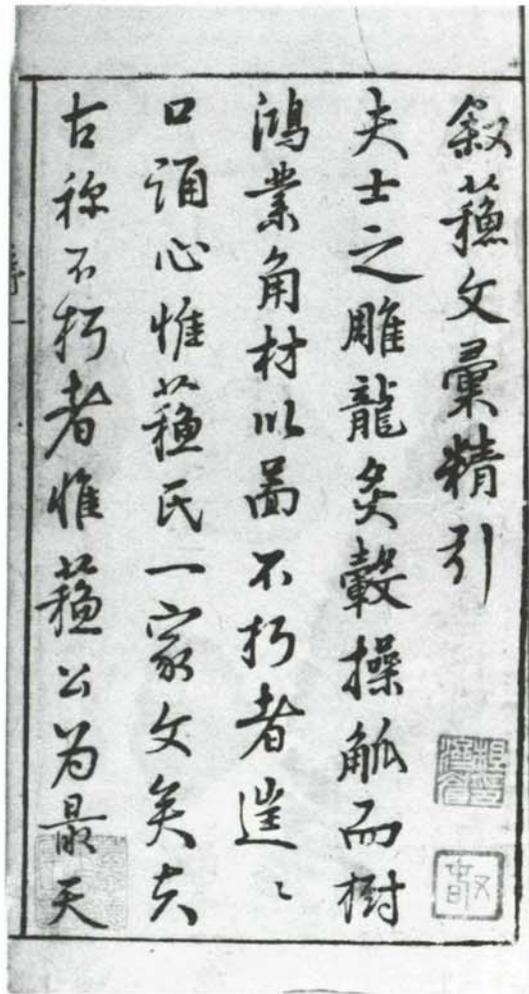
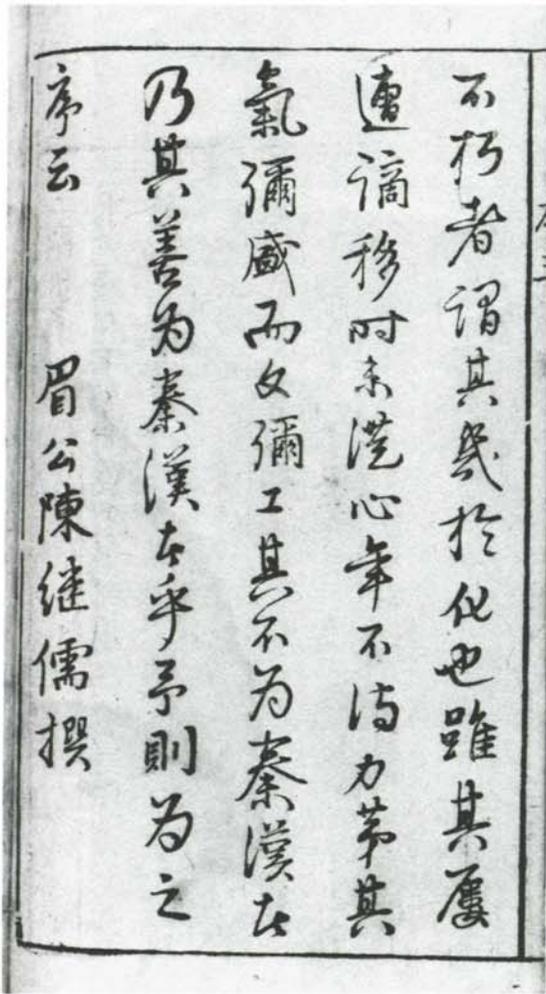


107a.

amazing. The brush flow in *Su-wen hui-ching* looks somewhat like that of no. 110 and the composition of characters in *Li-tai ming-wen tse* can also be related to no. 112. It seems that a deliberate effort has been made to imitate Ch'en's personal style to make the prefaces of these books appear authentic and the books themselves thereby more appealing. What we may conclude is that calligraphy had gained a new importance in printed books in late Ming times, either because the literati class was more artistically inclined or because commercially oriented printers had found in it a key to satisfy literati vanity.

THE CALLIGRAPHY OF  
TUNG CH'I-CH'ANG  
(1556-1637)

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang<sup>9</sup> was one of the greatest calligrapher-painters of the Ming, historically ranked on par with Mi Fu of the Sung and Chao Meng-fu of the Yüan. His preface to Wang Ao's literary anthology (discussed under no. 90) preserves in manuscript form his calligraphy (nos. 113a-b), actually a faithful tracing of corresponding printed text that is missing from the present copy. The calligraphy is doubtless that of Tung's, and thus it is instructive to



108a.

108a-b. *Li hsiang-kuo Chiu-wo hsien-sheng p'ing-hsüan Su-wen hui-ching*. 6 ch. (12 vols.).

Author: false attr. Li T'ing-chi (d. 1616), ed.

Date: 1620s (Chien-yang, Fukien).

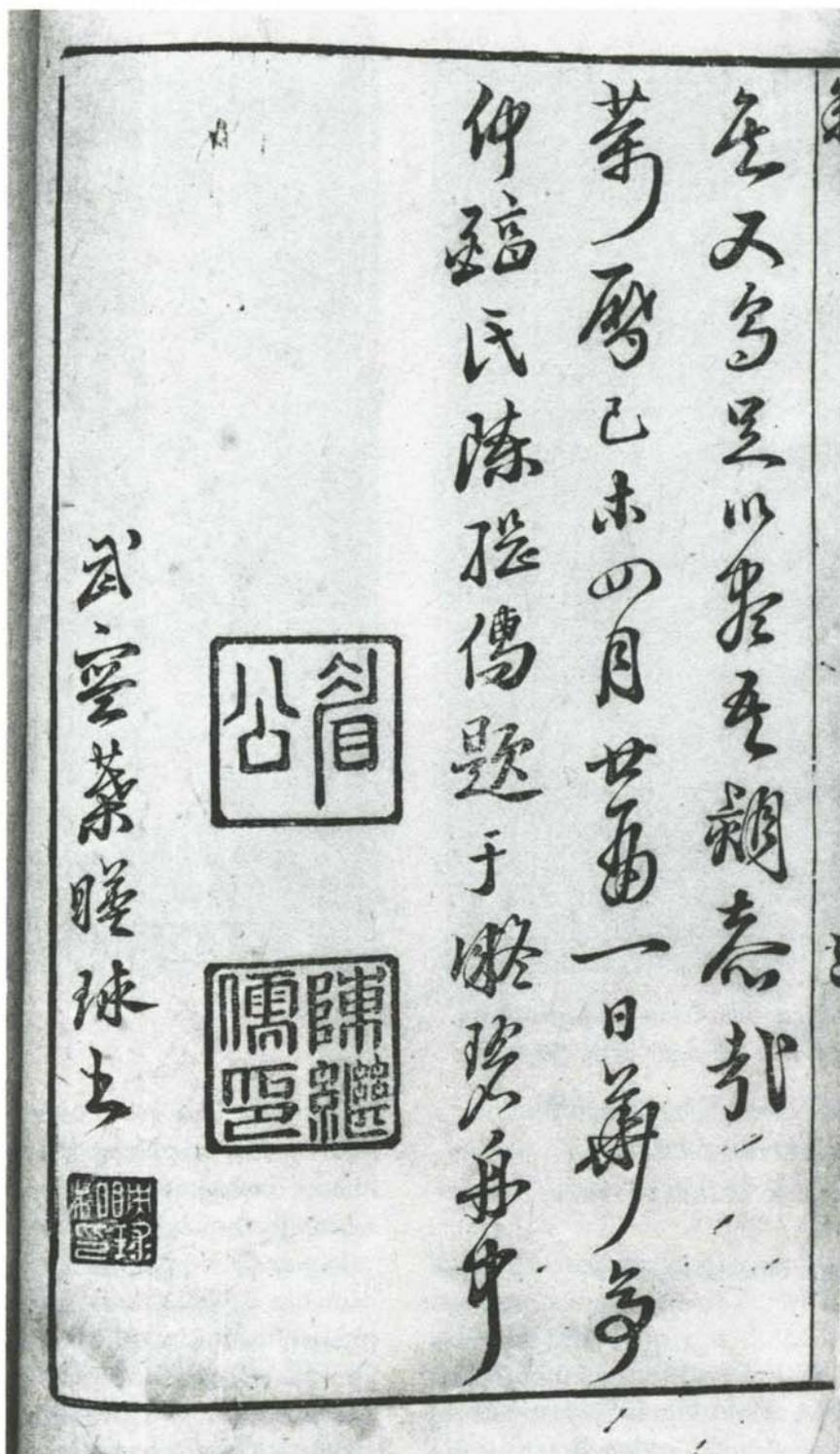
Dimensions: 9 cols. of 21 chars.; block, 19.9 + 2.1 x 12.2 cm.

Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

compare it with Tung's letters (no. 111). In both cases, the calligraphy assumes a semi-cursive, running style, though it is clear that the preface conveys a more consciously artistic expression, and was wrought for open circulation. One gets a sense that Tung adjusted his style according to the nature of his writing, and in the

case of autographed prefaces conformed to the circumstances of the author to whom his brush was dedicated.

In any event, he was a master of styles, versatile as well as innovative. For example, in his autographed preface to Ch'en Chi-ju's *Pai-shih ch'iao chen-kao* (not included in this exhibition), he exhibits a style with characteristics of standard and running scripts, with a touch of Su Shih's style, but he is nonetheless uniquely his own. The Princeton University Art Museum collections hold a number of fine examples, too numerous to illustrate here.



109a-b. *Ching-k'o Hsü Ch'en erh hsien-sheng p'ing-hsüan li-tai ming-wen tse*. 6 ch. (12 vols.).

Author: Hsü I, ed.

Date: 1621 (Chien-yang, Fukien).

Dimensions: 9 cols. of 22 chars.; block, 19.5 + 2.1 x 12.2 cm.

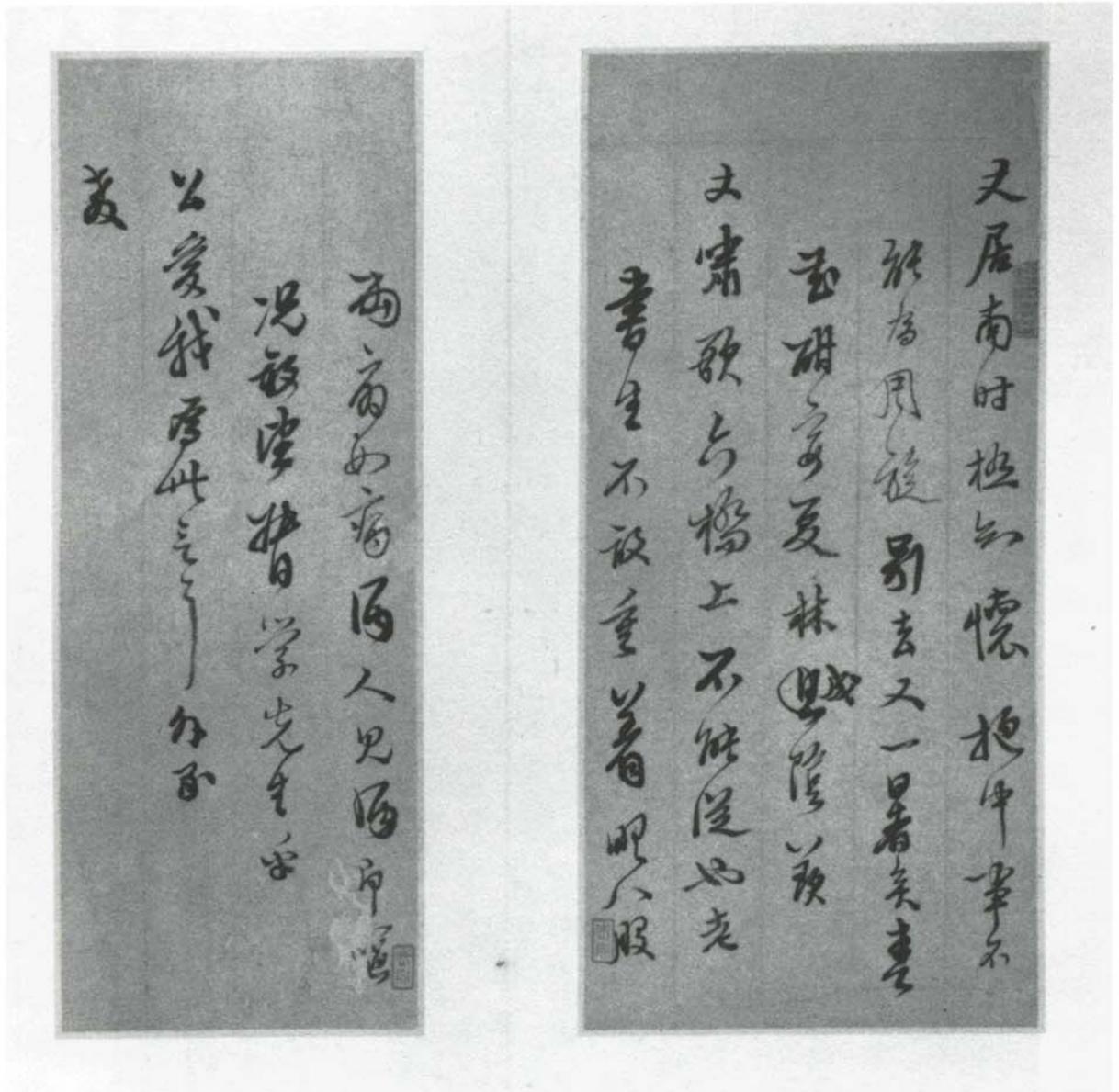
Collection: Gest Oriental Library.

在文所叙  
遂檢去先生存我東南也時  
不佞拙傳已久恐為珍不敢以姓  
名通而先生猶糈好集間以一刺  
遺余曰吾先孺子下其家仲季  
之梅今夫用擄以下集之梅未為



109a.

SECTION FIVE

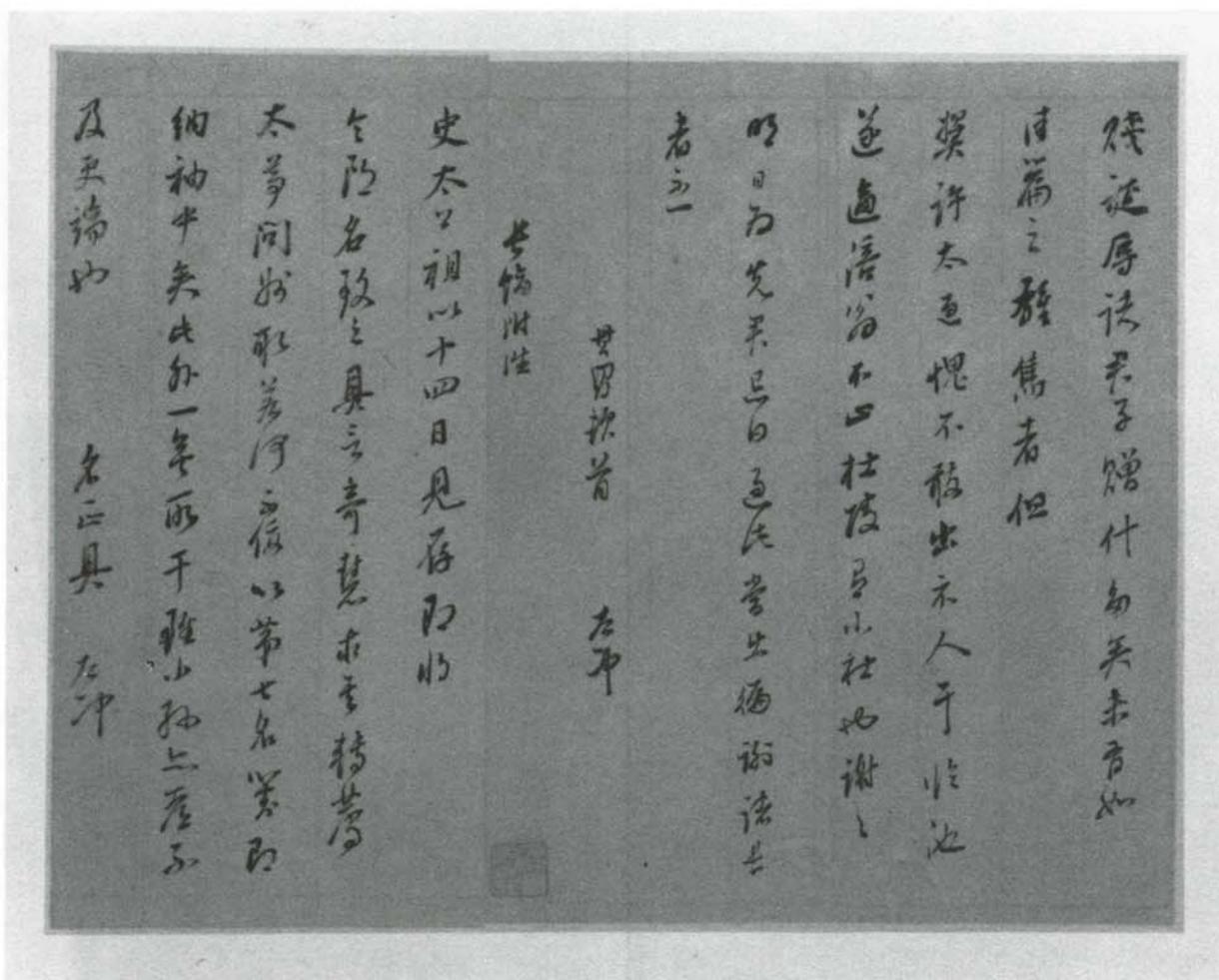


110. Letter by Ch'en Chi-ju.

Date: unknown.

Dimensions: 2 parts, 25 x 11.5 cm and 25 x 9 cm.

Collection: The Art Museum, Princeton University.



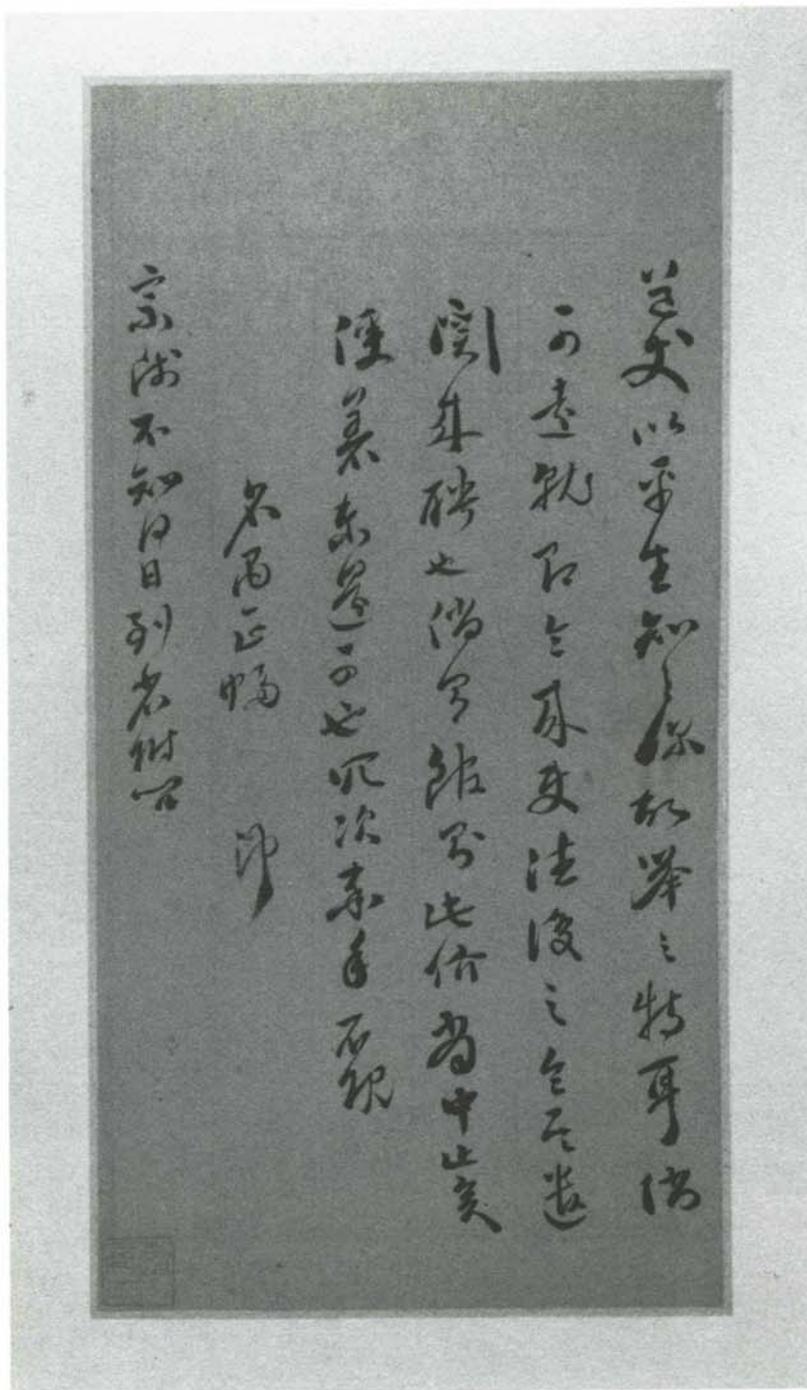
111. Letters by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang.

Date: unknown.

Dimensions: 24.3 x 31.4 cm.

Collection: The Art Museum, Princeton University.

SECTION FIVE



112a-b. Letter by Ch'en Chi-ju.

Date: unknown.

Dimensions: a) 26.8 x 23.1 cm; b) 26.8 x 13.7 cm.

Collection: The Art Museum, Princeton University.

嘉靖三十七年戊午生榮積十二年巳卯辛年八十二

去歲會城戲乃良時之賜以此  
身徒有鄉道矣以

直於出處時語人語耳大似在湖

第坊

念於祖上世有之謹為你通後人三不  
善藏不知作何究竟心為神之神

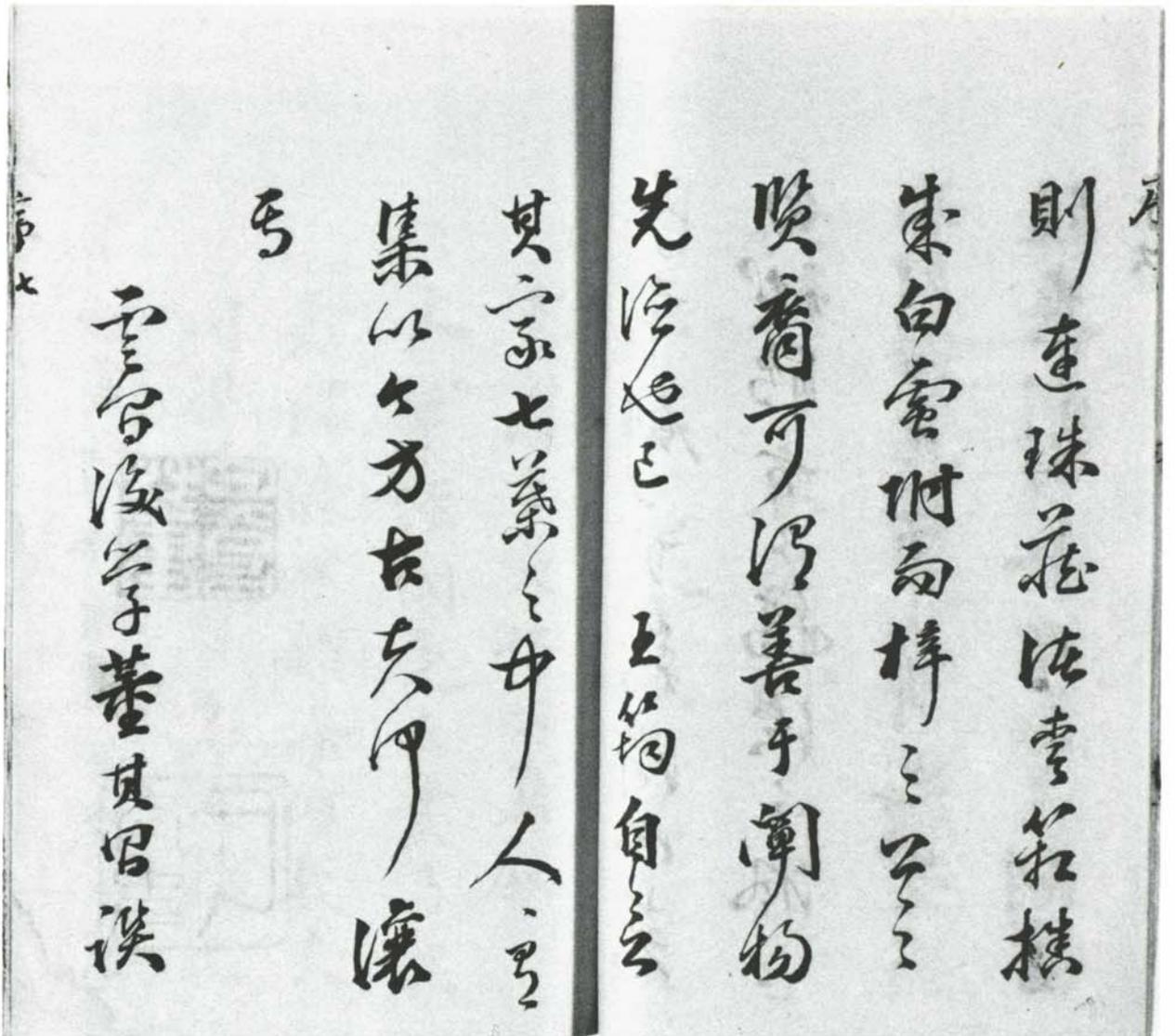
歲

此父身能教必近武進

莊文天書一書往一而強身壯健何

未極極洋

112a.



113a-b. Wang Wen-k'o kung chi. (See no. 90.)

震澤先生集序  
文恪公昭代偉人也其文  
章著撰則多扶宗匠也  
集不傷未州而補其之缺

113a.

## NOTES TO SECTION 5

1. *DMB*, pp. 1343-47; Ch'ü, *Gest Catalogue*, p. 446; Wang, *Shan-pen-shu*, p. 575; *SKTY* 171, p. 3a; and *Ming-jen*, p. 575.
2. Ch'ü, *Gest Catalogue*, p. 544.
3. Ch'ü, *Gest Catalogue*, p. 465; Wang, *Shan-pen-shu*, p. 630; *SKTY* 178, p. 2b; *DMB*, pp. 1489-90; and *T'ai-wan shu-ming so-yin*, p. 1733.
4. *Ming-jen*, pp. 127, 220; and *Ming-shih*, p. 3598.
5. Ch'ü, *Gest Catalogue*, pp. 274, 465, 513; Wang, *Shan-pen-shu*, p. 630; *SKTY* 192, p. 4a; 178, p. 2b; and *Ming-jen*, p. 575.
6. Ch'ü, *Gest Catalogue*, pp. 110, 528, 428, 479; *SKTY* 50, p. 11a; 193, p. 3b; 179, p. 7a; Wang, *Shan-pen-shu*, pp. 77, 378, 519, 645; Fu, *Ching-yen lu*, p. 1419; Chu Hung-lin, "Hsi-ch'ao ming-ch'en shih-lu chi Hsü ts'ang-shu k'ao," *Ta-lu tsa-chih* 72.6 (1986.6), pp. 277-83; and idem, "Shih-lun Hsi-ch'ao ming-ch'en shih-lu mao-hsi Hsü ts'ang-shu yüan-yu," *Ta-lu tsa-chih* 73.1 (1986.7), pp. 35-37.
7. *Ming-jen*, p. 123; *SKTY* 179, p. 13a; Yüan T'ung-li, comp., *A Descriptive Catalog of Rare Chinese Books in the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1957), p. 319; Chu I-tsun, *Ming-shih tsung* (rpt. Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1962) 58, p. 1a; Ku Ch'i-yüan, *Lan-chen ts'ao-t'ang wen-chi* (1618 edn.) 23, p. 6a; and Yao Nai et al., comps., *Chiang-ning fu-chih*. (1880 edn.) 38, p. 16a; 30, pp. 40a-b.
8. Ch'ü, *Gest Catalogue*, pp. 551-552; *Ming-jen*, p. 608; *ECCP*, p. 83; and Ch'en Chi-ju, *Pai-shih ch'iao chen-kao*, 24 ch. (1634 edn.).
9. *Ming-jen*, p. 735; and *ECCP*, p. 787.