

 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

東亞圖書館
East Asian Library
and the *Gest Collection*

This title is provided ONLY for personal scholarly use. Any publication, reprint, or reproduction of this material is strictly forbidden, and the researcher assumes all responsibility for conforming with the laws of libel and copyright. Titles should be referred to with the following credit line:

© The East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University

To request permission to use some material for scholarly publication, and to apply for higher-quality images, please contact gestcirc@princeton.edu, or

**The East Asian Library and the Gest Collection
33 Frist Campus Center, Room 317
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544
United States**

A fee may be involved (usually according to the general rules listed on <http://www.princeton.edu/~rbsc/research/rights.html>).

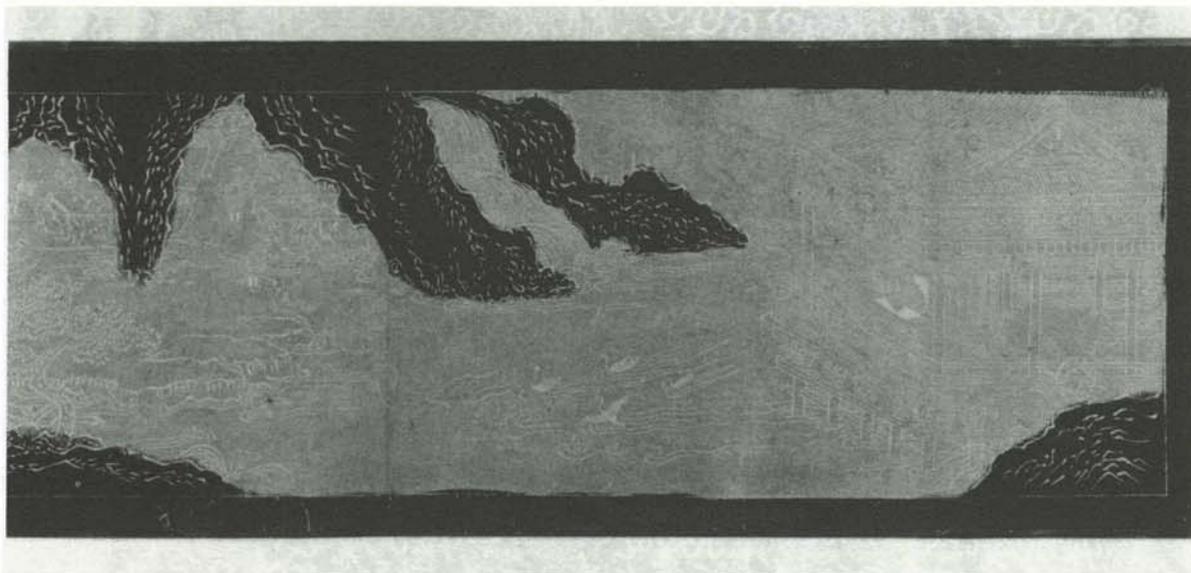
*Robert E. Harrist Jr., "Copies, All the Way Down: Notes on the Early Transmission of Calligraphy by Wang Xizhi", *The East Asian Library Journal* 10, no. 1 (2001): 176-196, accessed January 14, 2017,
https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/jr_robert_e_harrist.EALJ.v10.n01.p176.pdf*

Copies, All the Way Down

Notes on the Early Transmission of Calligraphy by Wang Xizhi

ROBERT E. HARRIST JR.

A pictorial rubbing from the early Ming dynasty (1368–1644), in the collection of the National Library of China, illustrates the most famous event in the history of Chinese calligraphy, the Gathering at the Orchid Pavilion (figure 1).¹ Hosted by the calligrapher Wang Xizhi (303–361), this party devoted to composing poems, drinking wine, and viewing landscape scenery took place in the spring of 353. At the end of the party Wang collected the poems written by his guests and commemorated the occasion in a prose essay known as the *Lanting ji xu* (Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection), an inspired performance of calligraphic art that Wang himself considered his greatest work.² For over sixteen hundred years, Chinese critics and connoisseurs have viewed the *Preface* as a shining embodiment of one of the highest ideals of the art of calligraphy—the attainment of spontaneous, untrammelled creativity. In the *Preface*, and in various other informal texts, especially his personal letters, Wang Xizhi was thought to have achieved an unimpeded circuitry of self-expression flowing from mind, to hand, to brush. In the words of the critic and theorist of calligraphy Sun Guoting (648?–703), when Wang wrote the *Preface* “his thoughts roamed and his spirit soared.”³

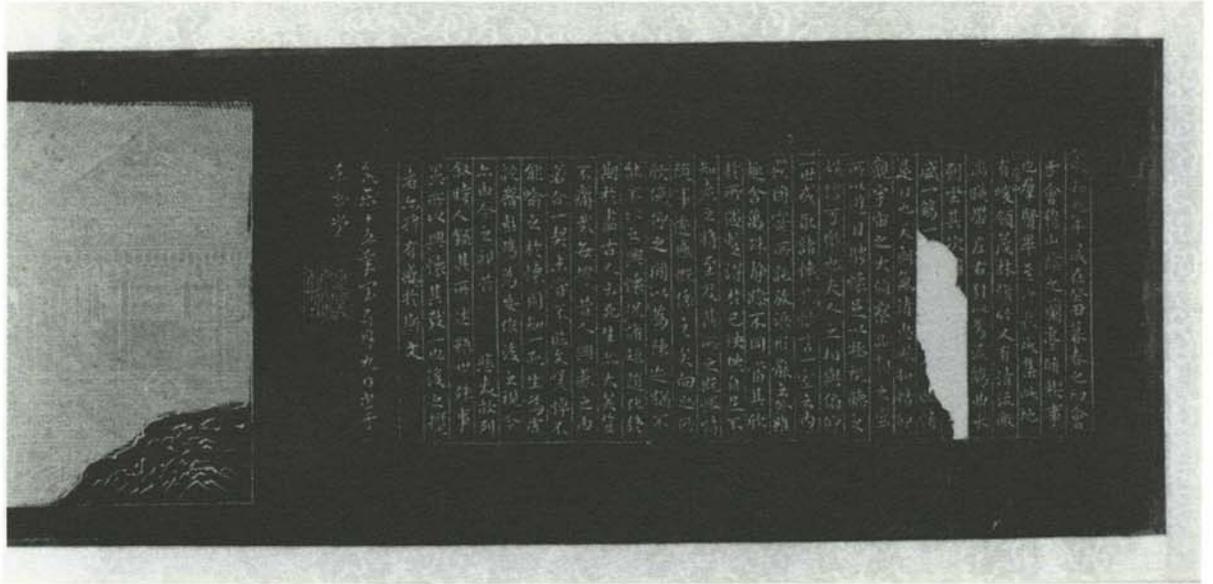


1. *Lanting xiuxi tu* (Illustration of the Gathering at the Orchid Pavilion). Based on a composition attributed to Li Gonglin (1041–1106); copied by Zhu Youdun (1379–1439) in 1417. Handscroll, ink rubbing on paper. Height, 22.1 cm. Date of rubbing unknown. National Library of China, Beijing. Photo: National Library of China, Queens Borough Public Library. *Visible Traces* catalogue, no. 41.

It is this state of creative exhilaration that the image in the rubbing evokes. Wang Xizhi is seen seated in the Orchid Pavilion watching swimming geese, whose graceful movements were said to have inspired his calligraphy. A fresh sheet of paper spread on his desk, he collects his thoughts before beginning to write.⁴

Mounted before the pictorial scene in the National Library of China's handscroll is a rubbing that preserves the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi's now-lost manuscript (figure 2). Known as the *Dingwu ben* (Dingwu version), the rubbing is believed to be based on a copy made in the seventh century, carved on stone, and later preserved at Dingwu in modern Hebei province.⁵ Unlike Wang's fabled manuscript, the rubbing was not the product of spontaneous invention: it was made through the slow, laborious effort demanded by the rubbing process, and its value lies in the faithfulness with which it is assumed to replicate the appearance of Wang Xizhi's writing.

The visualization of Wang Xizhi's famous party and the shapes of the characters he wrote that day are familiar elements in a remarkably powerful and cohesive cultural tradition in China.⁶ The history of Wang's



2. After Wang Xizhi (303–361). *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection*. 353. Based on the Dingwu stone engraving. Handscroll, ink rubbing on paper. Height, 22.1 cm. Date of rubbing unknown. National Library of China, Beijing. Photo: National Library of China, Queens Borough Public Library.

Preface embodies, however, two paradoxes: the first concerns the nature of writing itself; the second concerns the means through which people acquired knowledge of Wang Xizhi's style.

Although creativity and personal expression are supremely valued achievements in calligraphy, the characters of Wang's *Preface* were not his original inventions: each was based on a preexisting configuration of graphic patterns transmitted from calligrapher to calligrapher over many centuries. Consider the character *tian* or "heaven." Originating as a pictographic representation of a human figure, the character appears in a bronze inscription of the Western Zhou period (1045–771 BCE) in essentially the same form used by Wang Xizhi in his *Preface* (figures 3A and B). The shapes of the strokes and the proportions of the elements that make up the character differ strikingly in the two examples: the bronze inscription, written in seal script, was produced by a stylus that made incisions in the surface of the clay used to cast the vessel, whereas the same character in Wang's *Preface*, in standard script, was written with a brush. In spite of the differences of media and script type, and in spite of the some thousand years separating the two acts of writing, the basic structure of the character, its graphic DNA, so to speak, was transmitted



3A.



3B.

3A. The character *tian* (heaven). Detail from a bronze inscription. Western Zhou period (1045–771 BCE). Photo from *Shodō zenshū* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1966–1969), vol. I, plate 65.

3B. The character *tian* (heaven). Detail from figure 2.

unchanged. This continuity illustrates that once a character came into general use, all subsequent acts of writing it were (and always will be) acts of copying, of reproducing preexisting forms.⁷ The inescapability of replication in the history of writing calls to mind a story recounted by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Asking about Indian views of cosmology, a literal-minded Englishman was told that the world rests on a platform, which rests on the back of an elephant, which rests in turn on the back of a turtle. When he asked what was under the turtle, he was told there is another turtle. And below that? “Ah Sahib, after that it is turtles all the way down.”⁸

One could say of Chinese calligraphy that it, too, is copies, all the way down. This means that when Wang Xizhi brushed his immortal masterpiece on that splendid spring day in 353, spacing the characters with unerring sureness, shaping the silhouettes of the strokes as they had never been shaped before, quickening every dot and line with the genius of his invention, he was, nevertheless, working from top to bottom, right to left, observing the same stroke order a beginning calligrapher still uses today, reproducing the patterns of lines, dots, and hooks that he had learned from his teacher, Wei Furen (Madam Wei; 272–349), which she had learned from hers, on back, turtlelike, into the history of Chinese writing. Although it is true that the seemingly infinite variations produced by the brushwork of an individual writer result in a distinctive personal “touch” that some have likened to the timbre of the singing voice, at the level of the characters themselves the writer’s individuality and freedom of invention are virtually nil.⁹

Just as writing itself depends on the replication of preexisting forms, the transmission of famous works, most notably Wang's *Preface*, has depended on processes of copying. As early as the Han dynasty (206 BCE–CE 220) people seem to have begun to think of calligraphy as a fine art, more or less in the way we understand that elusive concept today; but it was not until the early Six Dynasties period (222–589) that what might be termed a “culture” of calligraphy took shape—a set of practices that included the emergence of a critical discourse on calligraphy, the formation of collections of calligraphy, and the appearance of a burgeoning art market in which pieces of calligraphy became valuable commodities.¹⁰ It is from precisely this period that we begin to find records of people making copies of calligraphy that were mistaken for originals. According to a story recorded by Yu He (fl. ca. 470) in his *Lunshu biao* (Memorial on Calligraphy), among the first to become confused by the existence of these copies was none other than Wang Xizhi:

[Wang] Xizhi himself wrote a memorial to emperor Mu (Mudi; r. 344–361). The emperor had Zhang Yi make a copy of it, which differed not by a single hair. He then wrote an answer after [the copied memorial and returned it to Wang]. At first, Xizhi did not recognize [it was a copy]. He examined it more closely, then sighed and said: “This fellow almost confounded the real!”¹¹

Scholars and connoisseurs who despair over sorting out originals from copies today should be both humbled and comforted by this story: if Wang Xizhi got confused, how can others expect to avoid making mistakes?

Emperor Mu's little joke heralded a proliferation of copies produced in response to a growing demand for Wang's calligraphy during the decades immediately following his death. Some copies were made for the purpose of preserving and transmitting Wang's style, but others were intended to deceive and deserve to be considered forgeries.¹² Yu He records that certain shameless followers of Liu Yizong (d. 444), who bore the noble title marquis of Hui, learned to copy Wang's calligraphy. After soaking these copies in dirty water to make them look old, the forgers sold their handiwork to the marquis, whose collection came to consist

mainly of these bogus works.¹³ Although imitations of Wang Xizhi's calligraphy that were pure fabrications, not copies of preexisting works, most likely were produced by forgers at this early point in the transmission of Wang's writing, sources from the Six Dynasties rarely mention them explicitly. Far more attention was devoted to recording the production and circulation of copies.¹⁴

Copyists had at their disposal two processes through which to reproduce calligraphy.¹⁵ In the process known as *lin*, literally "to look down over," a copyist studies an original piece of calligraphy, usually placing it next to the paper or silk on which the copy is to be made and reproduces the shapes of the characters freehand, just as a student calligrapher imitates a model in order to perfect his own writing. Although an expert copyist can produce a striking likeness of an original, freehand copying is far less exact than tracing processes known by the general term *mo*. To make a tracing, the copyist places a sheet of paper over the original calligraphy and traces the characters stroke by stroke. The most precise and the most laborious method of tracing is known as *shuanggou kuotian*, "outline and fill-in," also sometimes called *shuanggou motian*, or "outline and ink fill-in." In this process, for which paper coated with a thin layer of wax to make it semitransparent was sometimes used, the copyist begins by outlining the silhouettes of each character, taking care to observe even the most minute inflections of the original brush strokes. In one refinement of this method, called *xiangta*, the copyist places the original in front of a window to make it easier to see through the tracing paper. After the outlining is complete, the shapes of the characters are filled in with ink.

The *shuanggou kuotian* process for copying calligraphy was in use by no later than the early sixth century, when it was mentioned by the Daoist master and calligraphy expert Tao Hongjing (452–536) in his correspondence on calligraphy with the Liang-dynasty emperor Wudi (r. 502–549).¹⁶ As Lothar Ledderose has noted, Tao Hongjing also refers to the tracing process in his *Zhèn'gào* (Declarations of the Perfected), a compilation of texts associated with the Shangqing sect of Daoism:

People today know about tracing model calligraphy by the two Wangs but have absolutely no understanding of tracing the

Scriptures of the Perfected. In fact this began with me. Furthermore, it is not always necessary to outline first and then fill in; one has only to use a single brush stroke to achieve a sense of kinetic force that scarcely differs from the original. As to talismans [*fu*], however, regardless of whether they are large or small, they should always be outlined and then filled in.¹⁷

Tao Hongjing's principal concern was the accurate replication of scriptures and talismans through the outline and fill-in process, but he specifically states that this technique was first used to replicate calligraphy by the "two Wangs"—Wang Xizhi and his almost equally famous son, Wang Xianzhi (344–388).

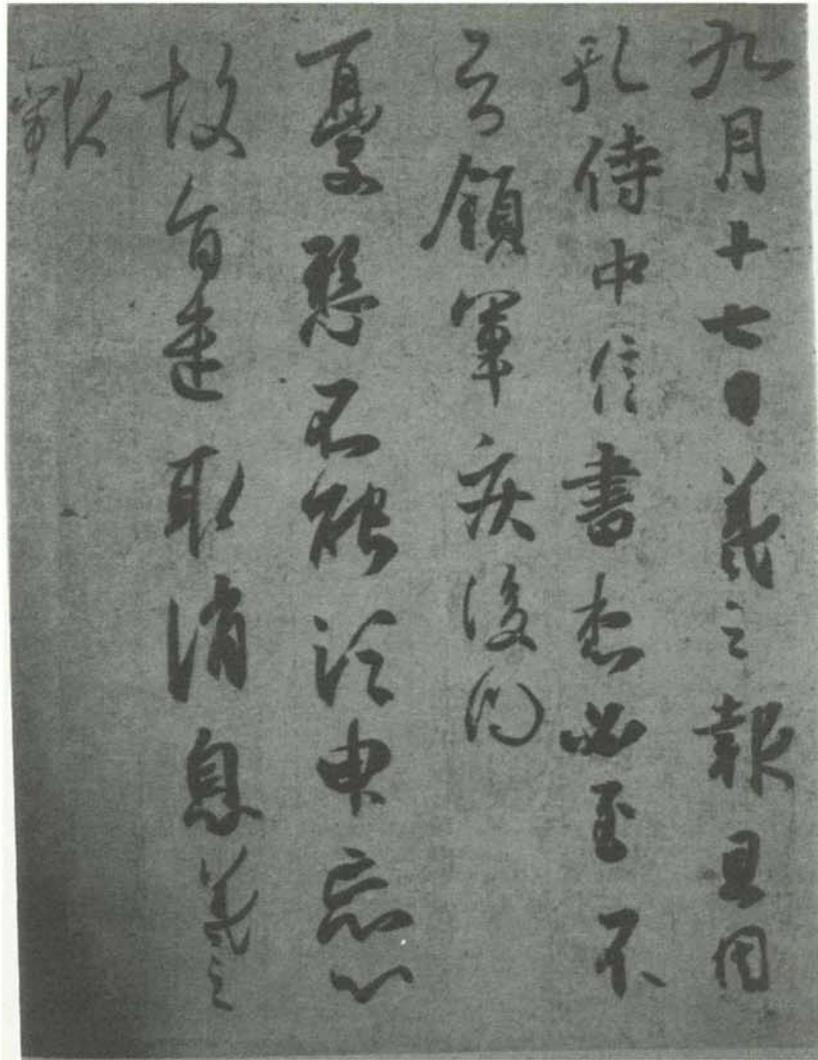
Unlike woodblock printing, invented in China no later than the seventh century CE, tracing requires no intermediate steps of engraving and printing. Considered within the context of world art, the tracing method of reproducing calligraphy seems to be unique in its accuracy and efficiency. Although artists in medieval Europe and in China used tracings to transfer designs from one surface to another, the traced pattern was not the finished work but merely a preliminary step yielding a visual guide or under drawing.¹⁸ And unlike a modern photographic image produced when light reflected from an object leaves an impression on the chemically treated surface of film, a calligraphic tracing is always the same size as the form it reproduces owing to the material contiguity of artifact and replica. Even when a copy is made from an earlier copy, this material linkage is maintained, like genes passed down in a family, or a handshake linking an individual to "the man who shook the hand of the man who shook the hand of Chairman Mao."¹⁹ At least in theory, all the traced copies of the *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection*, and, as we will see, all the rubbings made from these copies, retain this bond with the original calligraphy.

The history of critical responses to Wang Xizhi can be charted through records of how and when his works were copied, beginning during his own lifetime. Copies continued to be made during the later Six Dynasties, especially during the reign of the calligraphy-loving Liang-dynasty emperor Wudi, who commanded Tao Hongjing and other experts to make copies of Wang's letters and of his transcription of the

“Yue Yi lun” (Essay on Yue Yi).²⁰ What might be called the golden age of tracing, the Tang dynasty (618–907), was also the period during which Wang’s status in the history of calligraphy was codified for all time through the intervention of the emperor Taizong (r. 627–649). Not only did Taizong assemble a huge collection of Wang’s calligraphy, he also sponsored the production of numerous copies that were disseminated during the Tang dynasty and later became invaluable records of lost original works.

Copying played an important role in the history of Taizong’s ownership of his most prized possession, the original manuscript of the *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection*. It was after seeing a copy of the manuscript that Taizong resolved to acquire the original by means fair or foul, dispatching the imperial censor Xiao Yi (fl. ca. 626–649) to steal it from the elderly monk Biancai (fl. ca. 600–649)—the most notorious act of trickery in the history of Chinese art collecting.²¹ In 636, Taizong had copies of the *Preface* made at his court and conferred these on various high-ranking ministers and imperial relatives.²² The eighth-century authors who record these events use the word *ta* to refer to copies of the *Preface*. Although some scholars translate this word as “rubbing,” Nakata Yūjirō demonstrates that it actually designated ink copies, not rubbings. He argues also that the post of *tashu ren* or *tashu shou* established at Taizong’s court should be understood to mean “copyist,” not “rubbing maker,” the translation used in Charles Hucker’s dictionary of official titles.²³

In addition to the *Preface*, private letters by Wang Xizhi and other aristocrats of the Six Dynasties were reproduced through tracing copies at Taizong’s court and at the courts of his imperial successors. Extant examples believed to date from the Tang period include artifacts with truly remarkable pedigrees. One of these is the letter known as *Kong Shizhong tie* (Palace Attendant Kong; see figure 4).²⁴ Mounted with two other traced letters, this work is among copies of Wang Xizhi’s calligraphy that have been in Japan since the eighth century. The letter bears a seal of the emperor Kanmu (r. 781–806) from the Enryaku reign period (782–806), but the original calligraphy from which the letter was traced in China was owned by none other than the Tang emperor Taizong, and its opening passage is quoted in the inventory of Taizong’s collection



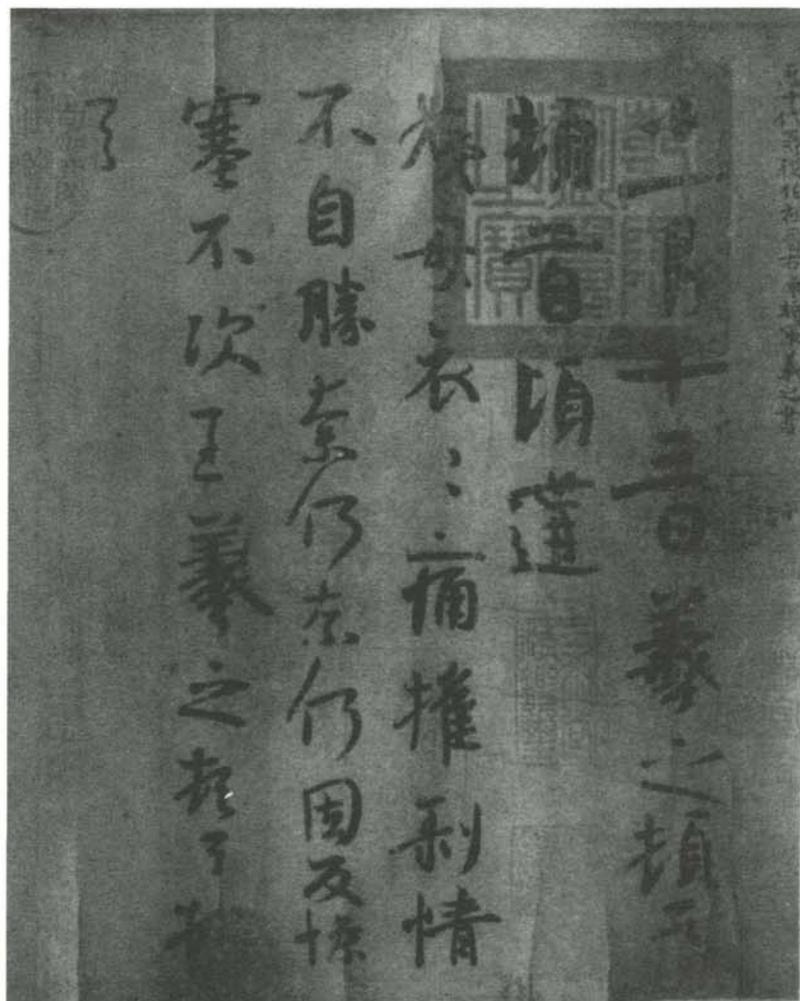
4. After Wang Xizhi. *Kong shizhong tie*. Tracing copy from the Tang dynasty. Handscroll, ink on paper. Height, 26.9 cm. Private collection, Tokyo. Photo from *Shufa zhuanke bian*, in *Zhongguo meishu quanji* (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1986), vol. 2, plate 50, p. 83.

compiled by Chu Suiliang (596–658), a leading calligrapher of the seventh century.²⁵

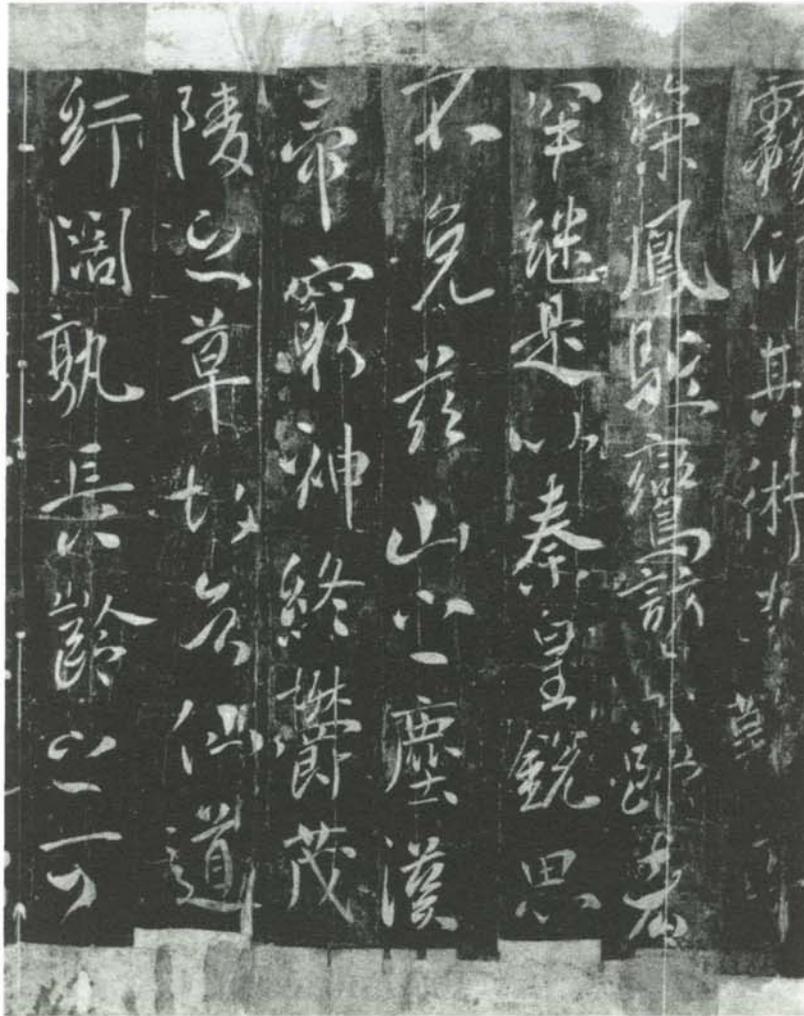
Another famous letter preserved in Japan, *Sangluan tie* (Disorder during Mourning), also bears a seal of the Enryaku period.²⁶ Although it does not appear among the titles in Chu Suiliang's inventory, the partial signatures of calligraphy experts of the Liang-dynasty court still visible on the letter lead some scholars to argue that it might be a tracing copy from the sixth century; it seems more likely, however, that these signatures were copied along with the original letter during the reign of Taizong. Partial signatures of Liang- and Sui-dynasty connoisseurs appear also on three letters recorded as separate items by Chu Suiliang that were combined as tracings in a single scroll, now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.²⁷ Another set of tracings, dated 697, was produced during the reign of the Tang empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705) and preserve calligraphy presented to the court by a certain Wang Fangqing (d. 702), a descendant of Wang Xizhi. The original letters, which were returned to Wang Fangqing after the tracing project was complete, vanished long ago. The first item in this set of tracings is the letter *Yimu tie* (My Great Aunt; see figure 5), which some scholars have argued represents the early style of Wang Xizhi.²⁸

In addition to tracings, rubbings played an important role in disseminating knowledge of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi. Although the technical means to produce rubbings from engraved or cast inscriptions became available as soon as paper was invented, no later than the second century CE, the early history of this process is surprisingly murky. Thomas Francis Carter probably was correct when he argued many years ago that “the practice [of making rubbings] began not so very long before the date of the earliest rubbings found—perhaps in the sixth century.”²⁹ The earliest indisputable evidence for the production of rubbings is an example found at Dunhuang bearing an inscription datable to 654. Known as *Wenquan ming* (Eulogy on the Hot Springs), this rubbing was taken from a stele engraved with the calligraphy of none other than the Tang emperor Taizong himself (see figure 6).³⁰

The initial steps in the process of replicating a piece of calligraphy as a rubbing are the same as those necessary to make a tracing copy. A sheet of translucent paper is placed over the original writing, and the



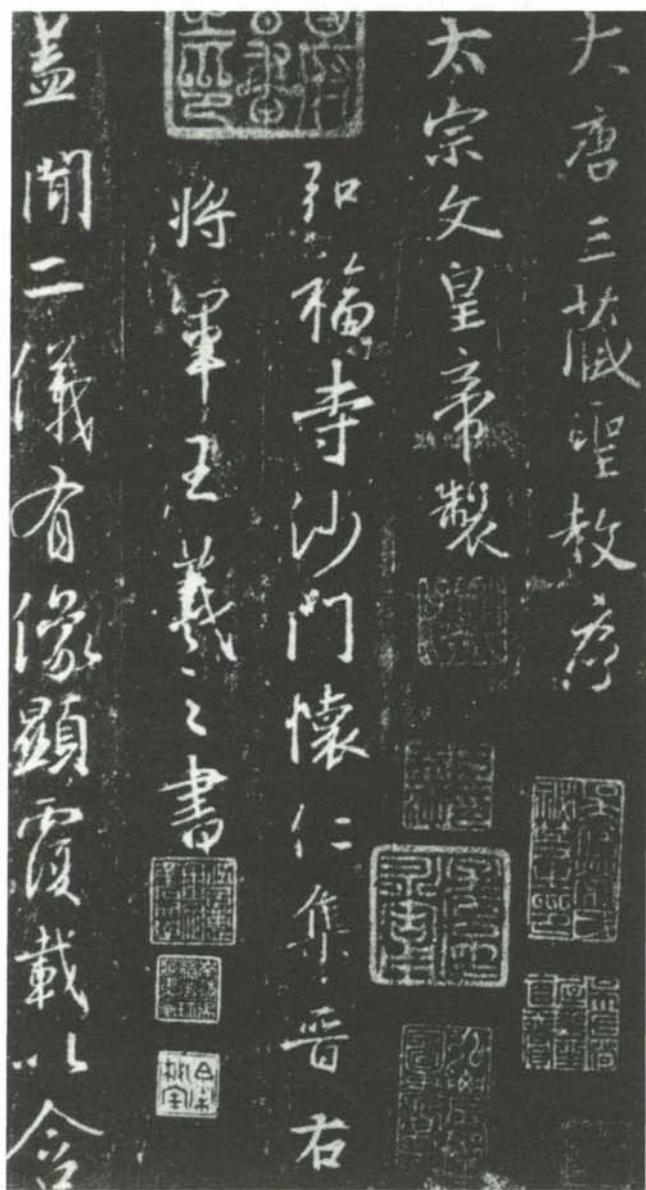
5. After Wang Xizhi. *Yimu tie*. Tracing copy from the Tang dynasty. Handscroll, ink on paper. Height, 26.3 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang. Photo from *Shufa zhuanke bian*, vol. 2, plate 43, p. 72.



6. Emperor Tang Taizong. *Wenquan ming*, 648. Rubbing of a stone stele. Bibliothèque nationale, Paris. Photo from *Shufa zhuanke bian*, vol. 3, no. 34, p. 70.

characters are carefully outlined. According to the contemporary scholar Wang Zhuanghong the next step is to outline the characters again on the back of the paper using vermilion pigment, often referred to as cinnabar.³¹ In a description of this process the Southern Song poet and author of a treatise on calligraphy Jiang Kui (ca. 1155–ca. 1221) advised that “in filling in the outlines or putting cinnabar on the back of the paper, one must faithfully duplicate the thickness or thinness of the original [strokes].”³² Once the outlining in red is complete, the paper is pressed onto the surface of a stone coated with wax and ink that pick up the shapes of the outlined characters. Guided by these shapes, engravers incise the stone. A rubbing is made by placing a sheet of paper over the stone and tamping it with an ink pad to produce vivid white silhouettes of the engraved characters set off against the black background that corresponds to the flat, unengraved areas of the stone. Exactly the same process is used for reproducing calligraphy on wood, a process that the Ming-dynasty connoisseur Sun Kuang (1543–1613) labeled the “Five Barriers” (*wu zhang*) separating the original from the rubbing: tracing the characters on a sheet of paper, outlining on the back with red pigment, transferring the outlined characters to wood or stone, carving, and finally making the rubbing.³³ A calligraphic rubbing cannot be mistaken for an ink-written original, as a tracing copy easily can be; rubbings do retain, though less directly, a material link to the original works they reproduce through the interface of original to tracing paper, tracing paper to stone, and stone back to paper in the form of the rubbing.

The *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection* and a set of letters by Wang Xizhi known collectively as *Shiqi tie* (On the Seventeenth) may have been carved on stone and reproduced as rubbings at the court of Taizong, though evidence for this is ambiguous.³⁴ A far better documented example of calligraphy by Wang carved on stone during the Tang period is the stele titled *Shengjiao xu* (Preface to the Sacred Teachings). Carved in 672, the stele is preserved today in the Forest of Stelae (Beilin) in the Shaanxi Provincial Museum (figure 7).³⁵ The text of the stele includes the Tang emperor Taizong’s preface to a translation of sutras prepared by the Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang (ca. 599–664), an expression of gratitude written by Xuanzang himself, and a record of these events by the emperor Gaozong (r. 649–684). The production of



7. *Ji Wang shu Shengjiao xu* (Preface to the Sacred Teachings in the Calligraphy of Wang Xizhi). Rubbing from a stone stele dated 672. Photo from *Zhongguo shufa quanji* (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 1991), vol. 18, plate 128, p. 214.

the stele required three steps. The Buddhist monk Huairen (fl. ca. 672), said to be a descendant of Wang Xizhi, selected characters from various works by Wang, including *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection* and *Disorder during Mourning*, and collated these to yield a transcription of the texts to be carved on the stele. Zhuge Shenli (fl. ca. 672) carried out the work of tracing the characters onto the stone, after which the carving was done by Zhu Jingcang (fl. ca. 672). Consisting of 760 different characters, the *Preface to the Sacred Teachings* came to serve as an authoritative compendium of Wang Xizhi calligraphy that could be disseminated through rubbings taken from its surface.

The history of collecting rubbings into volumes known as “model calligraphies” (*fatie*) began in the Song dynasty (960–1279) with the production of the ten-volume *Chunhua bige fatie* (Model Calligraphies from the Imperial Archives of the Chunhua Era) sponsored by the Song emperor Taizong (r. 976–997).³⁶ Over half the calligraphy in this anthology consisted of works by Wang Xizhi and his son Wang Xianzhi. Rubbings of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi continued to dominate the hundreds of anthologies produced by the imperial court and by private connoisseurs in later centuries. The scale on which calligraphy by Wang Xizhi was reproduced through engravings and rubbings can be surmised from a statement in one of thirteen colophons written by Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) for a version of the *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection*:

When the Song had not yet crossed the river (before the fall of the Northern Song in 1127), all the literati had [a copy of the *Preface*]. When the stone engraving was lost, every family of connoisseurs in Jiangnan had a stone cut. There is no way to know how many tens of hundreds of versions were made, and it began to be hard to tell apart the real and the fake.³⁷

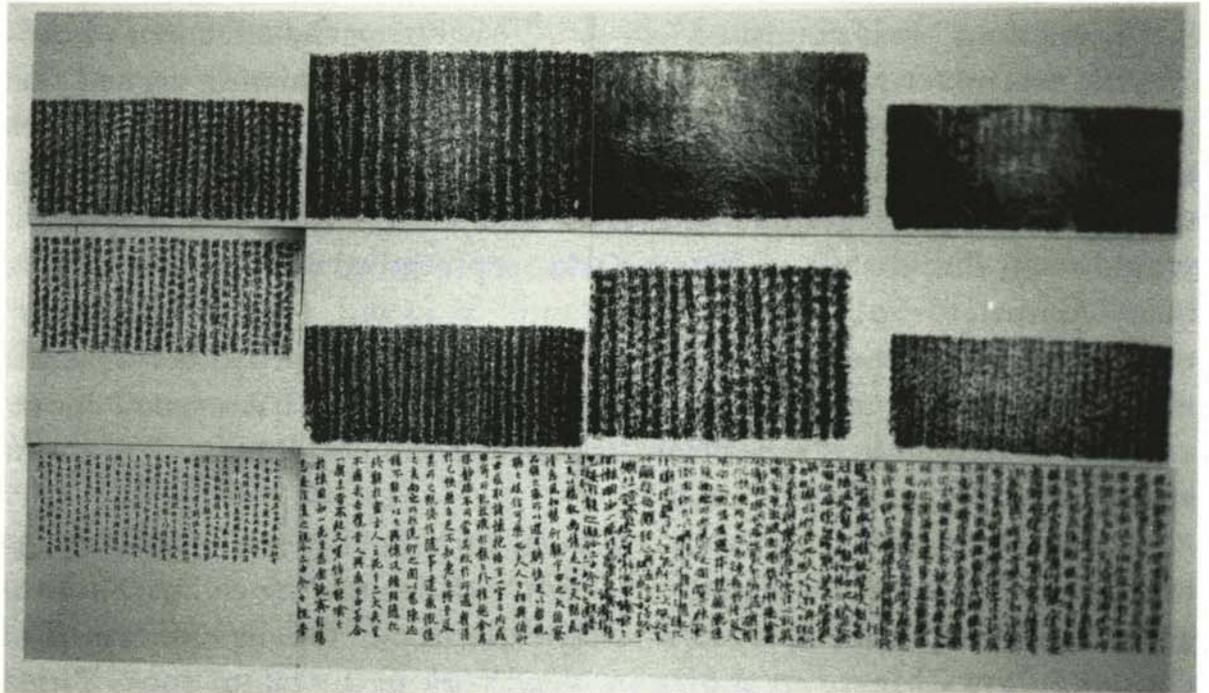
What these rubbings printed in large numbers achieved was a means of spreading knowledge of Wang’s calligraphy faster and more economically than the use of tracings alone could allow.

The multiplication of tracings and rubbings of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi calls to mind modern phenomena discussed in the famous essay by Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction," first published in 1936.³⁸ Analyzing the effects of photographic reproduction on the status of works of art, Benjamin argued that the quality he called an "aura," the near-sacred power associated with unique, original works of art, became fatally diluted through the mass circulation of photographic images. If Benjamin's theory is correct, it would seem that the art of Wang Xizhi, reproduced continuously for so many centuries, should have lost its "aura" long ago. Instead, the "aura" of Wang Xizhi actually increased, indeed, was created by, the dissemination of copies and rubbings. As David Freedberg has argued in his critique of Benjamin, "repetition, sheer repetition . . . engenders a new and compelling aura of its own."³⁹

Surely one of the most interesting, though also one of the strangest, of recent commentaries on the practice of replicating calligraphy was an installation produced by Qiu Zhijie (b. 1969) for an exhibition of contemporary Chinese art shown in New York in the fall of 1998. Titled *Writing the Orchid Pavilion Preface One Thousand Times*, Qiu's installation included video documentation and brush-written calligraphy. Like thousands, perhaps millions, of calligraphers before him, working in the method classified as *lin* rather than *mo*, Qiu performed the ritualistic act of replicating the brushwork of Wang's famous manuscript. Qiu's *One Thousand Copies* were not, however, on separate sheets of paper: instead, Qiu copied the *Preface* one thousand times on the *same* sheet of paper (figure 8). By the time his project was done, the overlaid copies had yielded not a replica of Wang's masterpiece but an impenetrable field of ink on which no calligraphy at all could be detected. According to Wu Hung, Qiu Zhijie has studied theories of postmodernism and deconstruction and is interested in making himself and his art seem invisible.⁴⁰ But paradoxically, Qiu makes *visible* the process of copying and calls attention to this act, even as he makes all vestiges of his model disappear.

What would Wang Xizhi make of this young artist's work? Perhaps Wang would say, as he said when tricked by the copy of his memorial to the Jin-dynasty emperor Mu: "This fellow almost confounded the real!" But far from confounding the real, Qiu Zhijie forces us to ponder, all the way down, the nature of invention and repetition, original and copy, in the art of calligraphy.



8. Qiu Zhijie, *Writing the "Orchid Pavilion Preface" One Thousand Times*. 1986–1997. Installation with video documentation and ink on paper calligraphy; installation approx. 500 x 500 cm.; calligraphy 75 x 180 cm. Photo from Gao Minglu, ed., *Inside Out: New Chinese Art*. Exhibition catalogue, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Asia Society Galleries, New York (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), plate 8.

NOTES

1. Philip K. Hu, ed., *Visible Traces: Rare Books and Special Collections from the National Library of China* (New York: Queens Borough Public Library; Beijing: National Library of China, 2000), no. 41, pp. 150–154. For an extensive bibliography concerning this rubbing, see p. 270.
2. The *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection* is the subject of a vast bibliography. For the best account in English, see Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 19–24. See also Kanda Kiichirō, ed., *Shodō zenshū*, 3rd ed., 26 vols. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1966–1969), vol. 4, pp. 158–164, and Liu Zhengzheng, ed., *Zhongguo shufa quanji* (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 1991), vol. 18, pp. 35–40, vol. 19, pp. 353–355.
3. Sun Guoting, *Shupu*, in Chang Ch'ung-ho and Hans H. Frankel, trans., *Two Chinese Treatises on Calligraphy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 10–11.
4. *Visible Traces*, p. 152. Note that Wang Xizhi appears again in the pictorial composition, as the second seated figure on the far bank of the stream.
5. *Shodō zenshū*, vol. 4, p. 163; *Zhongguo shufa quanji*, vol. 19, p. 354.
6. For the concept of a “culture of calligraphy,” see Robert E. Harrist Jr., “A

- Letter from Wang Hsi-chih and the Culture of Chinese Calligraphy," in Robert E. Harrist Jr., Wen C. Fong, et al., *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection at Princeton University* (Princeton, N.J.: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), pp. 241-257.
7. The *Shuowen jiezi*, 15 juan, compiled by Xu Shen, of 100 CE, contains 9,353 characters; the dictionary *Leipian*, 45 juan, attributed to Sima Guang, actually compiled and edited by Wang Zhu, Hu Su, et al., of 1066, has 31,319. Clearly, *somebody* was inventing characters, although, according to Endymion Wilkinson, who cites these figures, "an unchanging core of no more than a few hundred basic characters have remained the most frequently used since the Shang dynasty to the present day." Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Harvard-Yenching Monograph Series, 46 (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Asia Center, distributed by Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 47.
 8. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 28-29.
 9. Lothar Ledderose points out the essential role of copying in Chinese calligraphy in *Mi Fu*, p. 33, and in *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 196-199.
 10. Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, pp. 28-33. For the growing importance of calligraphy during the Han dynasty, see Michael Nylan, "Calligraphy, the Sacred Text and Test of Culture," in Cary Y. Liu, Dora C. Y. Ching, and Judith Smith, eds., *Character and Context in Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton, N.J.: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), pp. 17-77.
 11. Yu He, "Lunshu biao," in Zhang Yanyuan (ninth century), comp., *Fashu yaolu*, in Lu Fusheng, ed., *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), vol. 1, p. 39. For a slightly different translation, see Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, p. 37.
 12. I proceed here on the assumption that a forgery is not simply an artifact but a set of circumstances through which an act of deception takes place. See my essay "The Aesthetics of Replication and Deception in Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties Period" (forthcoming).
 13. Yu He, "Lunshu biao," p. 38.
 14. Harrist, "The Aesthetics of Replication and Deception."
 15. Among the studies of early copies and forgeries on which I have relied are Erik Zürcher, "Imitation and Forgery in Ancient Chinese Painting and Calligraphy," *Oriental Art*, n.s. 1, no. 4 (Winter 1955), pp. 141-146; Wen C. Fong, "The Problem of Forgeries in Chinese Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 25 (1962), pp. 95-140; Nakata Yūjirō, *Chūgoku shoronsū* (Tokyo: Nigensha, 1970), pp. 251-266; Fu Shen et al., *Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1977), pp. 3-39; and Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, pp. 33-39.
 16. Tao Hongjing, *Tao Yinju yu Liang Wudi lunshu qi*, in *Fashu yaolu*, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 1, pp. 40-42.
 17. Tao Hongjing, *Zhen'gao*, in *Zhengtong Daozang* (1436-1449; reprint, Taipei:

- Yiwen yinshuguan, 1962), *juan* 20, p. 1b; trans. Michel Strickman, "The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy," *T'oung Pao* 63, no. 1 (1977), p. 56 (adapted), cited by Lothar Ledderose, "Some Taoist Elements in the Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties," *T'oung Pao* 70 (1984), pp. 271-272.
18. On tracing and pouncing techniques in European painting, see James Douglas Farquhar, *Creation and Imitation: The Work of a Fifteenth-Century Illuminator*, Nova Studies in the Humanities (Nova-NYIT University Press, 1976). Concerning the use of similar processes in China, see Sarah Fraser, "Formulas of Creativity: Artists' Sketches and Techniques of Copying at Dunhuang," *Artibus Asiae* 59, nos. 3-4 (2000), pp. 189-224, and, by the same author, "The Artist's Practice in Tang Dynasty China," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1996.
 19. During the Cultural Revolution shaking hands with anyone who had shaken hands with Chairman Mao was considered a special honor. Weizhi Lu, personal communication, September 4, 2000.
 20. *Shodō zenshū*, vol. 4, p. 153; *Zhongguo shufa quanji*, vol. 19, pp. 366-368.
 21. Han Chuang (John Hay), "Hsiao I Gets the Lan-t'ing Manuscript by a Confidence Trick," *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 5, no. 3 (July-August 1970); 5, no. 6 (January-February 1971).
 22. He Yanzhi, *Lanting ji*, in *Fashu yaolu*, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 1, pp. 57-58, and Liu Su (fl. 742-745), *Sui Tang jiahua*, ed. Sheng Zhongjian et al., in *Zhongguo litai biji xiaoshuo xuanyi congshu* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1986), p. 159.
 23. Nakata, *Chūgoku shoronshū*, pp. 255-256. Cf. Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), no. 6125, p. 475.
 24. *Shodō zenshū*, vol. 4, p. 165; *Zhongguo shufa quanji*, vol. 19, p. 361.
 25. Chu Suiliang, *Jin Youjun Wang Xizhi shumū*, in *Fashu yaolu*, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 1, p. 49. Chu Suiliang records that this letter had eight lines, whereas the extant letter has only six. The opening lines of the text are the same, however, and most scholars accept the letter now in Japan as a copy of the one in the Tang imperial collection.
 26. The letter known as *Disorder during Mourning* is mounted with tracings of two other letters. See Eugene Wang, "The Taming of the Shrew: Wang Hsi-chih (303-361) and Calligraphic Gentrification in the Seventh Century," in Liu, Ching, and Smith, *Character and Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, pp. 133-173.
 27. *Shodō zenshū*, vol. 4, pp. 165-167; *Zhongguo shufa quanji*, vol. 19, pp. 359-360.
 28. *Zhongguo shufa quanji*, vol. 19, pp. 355-356.
 29. Thomas Francis Carter, *The Invention of Printing in China and Its Spread Westward* (New York: Ronald Press, 1925), p. 23, n. 4.
 30. Other early rubbings believed to date from the Tang dynasty include Ouyang Xun (557-641), *Huadusi Yong chanshi ta ming* (Record of the Pagoda for the Chan Master Yong of the Huadu Temple), *Shodō zenshū*, vol. 7, plates 44-45; and Liu Gongquan (778-865), *Jingang jing* (Diamond Sutra), *Shodō zenshū*, vol. 10, plates 82-83. Both are in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris.
 31. Wang Zhuanghong, *Beitie jianbie changshi* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1985), p. 9.

32. Jiang Kui, *Xu Shupu*, in Chang and Frankel, *Two Chinese Treatises*, p. 25.
33. Fu Shen et al., *Traces of the Brush*, p. 4. For the term "five barriers," see Sun Kuang, *Shuhua baba*, in *Yishu shangjian xuanzhen xuji* (Taipei: Hanhua wenhua shiye yanxian gongsi, 1971), *juan* 2b, p. 1a (p. 111).
34. Wang Zhuanghong, *Beitie jianbie changshi*, pp. 9–10.
35. *Shodō zenshū*, vol. 8, pp. 167–168; *Zhongguo shufa quanji*, vol. 19, pp. 408–409. See also Wang Qile, "Da Tang sancang shengjiao xu yu Wang Xizhi zhi shufa," in Liu Zhengcheng, ed., *Wang Xizhi yanjiu lunwen ji* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 1993), pp. 116–125. The stele is known by several different names. See *Zhongguo shufa quanji*, vol. 19, p. 408. For a second stele based on characters collated from works by Wang Xizhi, *Xingfusi bei* (Stele of the Xingfu Temple), see *ibid.*, pp. 409–410.
36. Amy McNair, "The Engraved Model-Letters Compendia of the Song Dynasty," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, no. 2 (1994), pp. 210–212.
37. Zhao Mengfu, *Zhao Mengfu ji*, ed. Ren Daobin, in *Liangze zuojia wencong* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1986), p. 253.
38. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt; translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 217–251.
39. David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 126.
40. Wu Hung, *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 1999), pp. 171–172.

GLOSSARY

Beilin 碑林	<i>Huadusi Yong chanshi ta ming</i>
Biancai 辨才	化度寺邕禪師塔銘
<i>Chunhua bige fatie</i> 淳化秘閣法帖	Huairan 懷仁
Chu Suiliang 褚遂良	Hui 惠
<i>Dingwu ben</i> 定武本	Hu Su 胡宿
Enryaku 延曆	Jiang Kui 姜夔
<i>Fashu yaolu</i> 法書要錄	Jiangnan 江南
fatie 法帖	<i>Jingang jing</i> 金剛經
fu 符	<i>Jin Youjun Wang Xizhi shumu</i>
Gaozong 高宗	晉右軍王羲之書目
He Yanzhi 何延之	<i>Ji Wang shu Shengjiao xu</i> 集王書聖教序

- Kanmu 桓武
 Kong Shizhong tie 孔侍中帖
 Lanting ji 蘭亭記
 Lanting ji xu 蘭亭集序
 Lanting xiuxi tu 蘭亭脩禊圖
 Leipian 類篇
 lin 臨
 Liu Gongquan 柳公權
 Liu Su 劉劼
 Liu Yizong 劉義宗
 Lunshu biao 論書表
 mo 墨
 Mudi 穆帝
 Nakata Yūjirō 中田勇次郎
 Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢
 Qiu Zhijie 丘志傑
 Sangluan tie 喪亂帖
 Shangqing 上清
 Shengjiao xu 聖教序
 Shiqi tie 十七帖
 shuanggou kuotian 雙鉤廓填
 shuanggou motian 雙鉤墨填
 Shuowen jiezi 說文解字
 Shupu 書譜
 Sima Guang 司馬光
 Sui Tang jiahua 隋唐嘉話
 Sun Guoting 孫過庭
 Sun Kuang 孫鑛
 ta 搨
 tashu ren 搨書人
 tashu shou 搨書手
 Taizong (r. 976-997) 太宗
 Taizong (r. 627-649) 太宗
 Tao Hongjing 陶弘景
 Tao Yinju yu Liang Wudi lushu qi
 陶隱居與梁武帝論書啓
 tian 天
 Wang Fangqing 王方慶
 Wang Xianzhi 王獻之
 Wang Xizhi 王羲之
 Wang Zhu 王洙
 Wang Zhuanghong 王壯弘
 Wei Furen 衛夫人
 Wenquan ming 溫泉銘
 Wudi 武帝
 Wu Zetian 武則天
 wu zhang 五障
 xiangta 嚮揚
 Xiao Yi 蕭翼
 Xingfusi bei 興福寺碑
 Xu Shen 許慎
 Xu Shupu 續書譜
 Xuanzang 玄奘
 Yimu tie 姨母帖
 Yu He 虞龢
 Yue Yi lun 樂毅論
 Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠
 Zhang Yi 張翼
 Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫
 Zhao Mengfu ji 趙孟頫集
 Zhuge Shenli 諸葛神力
 Zhu Youdun 朱有燉
 Zhen'gao 真誥
 Zhengtong Daozang 正統道藏
 Zhu Jingcang 朱靜藏