

The *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*: A Study of an Eleventh-century Compendium on Calligraphic Technique

Specific texts regarding the scripts of the Chinese writing system and the art of calligraphy began appearing in China at the end of the first century CE.¹ Since the *Postface to the Discussion of Single Characters and Explanation of Compound Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi xu* 說文解字序) by Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 55–ca. 149),² and the *Description*³ of the *Cursive Script*

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¹ On the origin of calligraphic texts, see Zhang Tiangong 張天弓, “Gudai shulun de zhao-shi: cong Ban Chao dao Cui Yuan” 古代書論的肇始：從班超到崔瑗, *Shufa yanjiu* 書法研究 (2003.3), pp. 64–76.

² Completed in 100 CE; postface included in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden* (*Shu yuan jinghua* 書苑菁華), 20 *juan*, edited by Chen Si 陳思 (fl. 13th c.), preface by Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁 (1178–1237), reproduction of the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) edition published in the series *Zhonghua zaizao shanben* 中華再造善本 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003), j. 16. English translation by Kenneth Thern, *Postface of the Shuo-wen Chieh-tzu* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1966), pp. 8–18. French translation in Françoise Bottéro, *Sémantisme et classification dans l'écriture chinoise* (Paris: Collège de France, 1996), pp. 17–42.

³ *Shi* 勢 is most often rendered with the word “force,” but there is also some debate about its meaning as a literary genre (perhaps close to “a description”). Zhang Tiangong provides an interpretation, but does not support treating the term as a genre name; Zhang, “Gudai shulun de zhao-shi,” n. 24. My use of it here as a genre name follows the explanation given in the *Wenzhang yuanqi* 文章緣起 by Ren Fang 任昉 (460–508), annotated by Chen Maoren 陳懋仁 (fl. early-16th c.) (Guoxue jiben congshu 國學基本叢書 edn.; Taibei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1929–1941), vol. 165, p. 18. It says: “*Shi*: Cui Yuan, the administrator of Jibei (present day Shandong), composed ‘*Caoshu shi*.’ A *shi* is an overview of the configuration of brush strokes and gives a description of the forms of characters 勢：漢濟北相崔瑗作草書勢。勢，商略筆勢，形容字體者也。” Thus, as a literary genre, a *shi* was a text that described the forms and configurations, or the properties, of the specified topic. Scholars have only rarely pointed out that *shi* also appears in other titles, such as the “*Shi on Chess*” (*Yi shi* 弈勢), which describes chess techniques (see Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 [557–641] et al., *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 [624], j. 74, pp. 1273–74). Also, the *Manual of Calligraphy* (*Shu pu* 書譜) by Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (ca. 647–ca. 690), completed in 687, bears a clear usage of *shi* as a literary genre in a compound with the character *ping* 評 (“criticism”): 至於諸家勢評，多涉浮華。“As for literary compositions on the property [of scripts] and the criticism [of calligraphers] by various authors, [it has to be said that] most are involved with showy features”). Modern studies are Bi Luo 畢羅 (Pietro De Laurentis), “Sun Guoting zhi zhiqi: *Shu pu* wenti kao” 孫過庭之志氣：《書譜》文體考, *Yi-*

(*Caoshu shi* 草書勢) by Cui Yuan 崔瑗 (77–142),⁴ China has seen throughout her history a massive production of texts related to the history of writing scripts, and the evaluation of calligraphers and their works.⁵

In spite of these early texts, it was actually not until the eleventh century that there appeared the first treatise which describes the configurations of the strokes and the visual structure of characters in a relatively systematic way – the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* (*Yutang jin jing* 玉堂禁經). Its text explains the eight basic brushstrokes of the standard script (*kaishu* 楷書), better known as the “eight methods of the character *yong*” (*yong zi ba fa* 永字八法), followed by a discussion of various aspects of brushwork and a series of technical devices for the arrangement of components. In addition, the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* also presents several theoretical passages which enrich the overall message of the text and help us better comprehend the creative process of calligraphy in traditional China. From its first editions onwards, the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* has always included an enlarged picture of the character *yong* in the standard script with the relevant name given at the side of each of the eight basic brush strokes. The work eventually became one of the most popular models of calligraphic technique (see figure 1).

The earliest source which transmits the full text of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* is the *Collection of the Ink Pond* (*Mochi bian* 墨池編), a Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) compendium of texts on calligraphy compiled by Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1039–1098);⁶ it was completed in 1066 (its preface is dated April 12, 1066).⁷ The *Forbidden*

shushi yanjiu 藝術史研究 10 (2008), esp. p. 127, n. 41; and Tanimura Kisai 谷村憲齋, *Tō Son Katei Sho hu–Shakubun kaisetsu* 唐孫過庭書譜—釋文解說 (Tokyo: Nigensha, 1979). On Sun Guoting and his *Shu pu*, see Pietro De Laurentis, *The Manual of Calligraphy by Sun Guoting of the Tang: A Comprehensive Study on the Manuscript and Its Author* (Napoli: Università di Napoli “L’Orientale,” forthcoming).

⁴ Included in the *Shi on the Four Calligraphic Scripts* (*Si ti shu shi* 四體書勢) by Wei Heng 衛恆 (252–291), quoted extensively in his biography in *Jin shu* 晉書 and in the anonymous *Swamp of Ink* (*Mo sou* 墨藪) (ca. 10th c.) (SKQS edn.), j. 2; see Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648) et al., *Jin shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974), j. 36, p. 1066; and André Kneib, “Le *Sitishu shi* de Wei Heng (252–291): Premier traité chinois de calligraphie,” *CEA* 9 (1996–1997), pp. 99–129.

⁵ Over time, texts on Chinese calligraphy have been collected in several types of source material, such as the biographical chapters of dynastic histories, literary collections, and specific compendia on calligraphy and painting. For a comprehensive study, see Yu Shaosong 余紹宋 (1882–1940), *Shu hua shulu jieti* 書畫書錄解題 (1932 edn., rpt. with addenda, Beijing: Beijing tushuguan, 2003).

⁶ Zhu Changwen’s biography is in Toktoghān (Tuo Tuo 脫脫, 1314–1355) et al., *Song shi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1977), j. 444, p. 13127.

⁷ The earliest extant edition is in twenty *juan* and twelve volumes; it is dated 1568. It is preserved in the Beijing National Library, the Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage, the Jilin Provincial Library, and the Shandong Provincial Library; see *Zhongguo*

Classic of the Jade Hall is included in the second part of the section on brush technique (*bifa* 筆法), one of the eight sections which comprise the *Collection of the Ink Pond*; furthermore, the *Forbidden Classic* is attributed to the Tang-dynasty (618–907) calligraphy scholar Zhang Huaiguan 張懷瓘 (fl. first half of the eighth century),⁸ author of the well-known *Judgements on Calligraphy* (*Shu duan* 書斷, completed in 727), and various other texts on calligraphy.⁹ However, as we shall discuss below, not only was Zhu Changwen quite skeptical of Zhang Huaiguan's authorship of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*, but also the few scattered records in regards of the origin of its content make the interpretation of its authorship even more complex.

This paper examines the origin, the authorship, and the meaning of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* in the light of philological and calligraphic realities, and provides, in the appendix, the first English translation of the theoretical parts of the text.

ON THE FIRST EDITIONS OF THE *COLLECTION OF THE INK POND*

As already stated, the earliest version of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* is that given in Zhu Changwen's *Collection of the Ink Pond*, however, there is no mention of the latter in the *Monograph on Classics and Books* (*Yiwen zhi* 藝文志) of the *History of the Song* (*Song shi* 宋史),¹⁰ although there is listed another of Zhu Changwen's compositions titled the *Sequel to the Judgements on Calligraphy* (*Xu Shu duan* 續書斷, preface dated September 2, 1074) in two *juan*.¹¹

The earliest extant edition of the *Collection of the Ink Pond* known to us is the twenty-*juan* printed edition commissioned by Li He 李荷

guji shanben shumu bianji weiyuanhui 中國古籍善本書目編輯委員會, ed., *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu shuming suoyin, zibu* 中國古籍善本書目, 子部 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), pp. 401, 1214. A 1580 edition in six *juan* and twelve volumes has been published in Taiwan (2 bound vols., Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1970). A 1733 edition in twenty *juan* and twelve volumes is included in Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖 et al., ed., *Zhongguo shuhua quan-shu* 中國書畫全書 (14 vols., Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1999) (hereafter cited as *ZGSHQS*) 1, pp. 201–445. The present study is based upon the 1580 reprint of the 1568 edition in six *juan* published by the National Taiwan Library.

⁸ Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1039–1098), *Mochi bian* 墨池編 (20 *juan*, 1066; 1580 6-*juan* edn.; rpt. in 2 vols., Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1970), j. 2, pp. 137–51. On the various editions of the *Collection of the Ink Pond*, see Qi Xiaochun 祁小春, *Maishi zhi feng: youguan Wang Xizhi ziliao yu renwu de zonghe yanjiu* 邁世之風：有關王羲之資料與人物的研究 (Taipei: Shitou chuban, 2007), pp. 76–84.

⁹ On Zhang Huaiguan's treatises on calligraphy, see Xue Longchun 薛龍春, *Zhang Huaiguan shuxue zhuzuo kao lun* 張懷瓘書學著作考論, Ph.D. dissertation (Nanjing Academy of Arts, 2004).

¹⁰ *Song shi*, j. 202, p. 5076.

¹¹ *Mochi bian*, j. 3, pp. 423–96.

(d. u.) and edited and inscribed by Xue Chen 薛晨 (d. u.) in 1568 (second year of the Longqing 隆慶 reign period; Xue Chen's preface dated August 5, 1568). Subsequently, two more editions were published: in 1580 (eighth year of the Wanli 萬曆 reign period) a reproduction in six *juan* of the 1568 edition was commissioned by Li Shicheng 李時成 (d. u.), and in 1733 (eleventh year of the Yongzheng 雍正 reign period), Zhu Xiangxian 朱象賢 (d. u.) edited a twenty-*juan* edition on the basis of the materials kept by Zhu Changwen's twenty-second-generation descendant, Zhu Zhimai 朱之勸 (d. u.).¹²

During the second half of the eleventh century, Zhu Changwen gained fame as a scholar both in his hometown Suzhou and in the Northern Song capital Kaifeng. Besides the *Collection of the Ink Pond*, he wrote many other works, such as the *History of the Zither* (*Qin shi* 琴史).¹³ Due to a leg injury he was not able to serve as an official, and so he lived in retirement in Suzhou, where he read and wrote extensively. During the years 1086–1094 he started lecturing and eventually was appointed erudite of the National University (Taixue *boshi* 太學博士) and then proofreader at the Palace Library (Bishusheng *zhengzi* 祕書省正字).¹⁴ As we know from his preface to the *Collection of the Ink Pond* he compiled the compendium at the age of twenty-seven: after ten years of painstaking study of calligraphy, through which he claimed to have found happiness and relief, Zhu Changwen decided to edit the various texts which he had so intensively studied, thus compiling the *Collection of the Ink Pond* in twenty *juan*.¹⁵

From Xue Chen's 1568 preface we learn that the *Collection* had been transmitted only through hand-written copies: "No printed editions [of the *Collection of the Ink Pond*] exist. The hand-written copies circulating are not without omissions and errors, whereas the text is quite heavy and complicated." From this we can safely deduce that the several hand-written copies circulating for over 500 years, between 1066 and 1568, modified the original content in at least a few places, or even added parts and explanations which did not perfectly correspond to the first version compiled by Zhu Changwen. For example, we notice that the *Collection of the Ink Pond* contains Zhu's own *Sequel to the Judgements on*

¹² Attached to the 1568 edition is a *Sequel* (*Xu bian* 續編) in three *juan*; the 1733 edition adds a *Compendium of Seals* (*Yin dian* 印典) in eight *juan*. The 1580 edition does not have any attached parts.

¹³ *Song shi*, j. 444, p. 13127. Chang Bide 昌彼德 et al., ed., *Songren ziliao zhuanji suoyin* 宋人傳記資料索引 (6 vols., Taipei: Dingwen, 1976), p. 608.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Preface included only in the 1568 and 1733 editions; see *ZGSHQS* 1, p. 202.

Calligraphy (preface dated September 2, 1074) – more than eight years after Zhu completed his preface to the *Collection of the Ink Pond*. Therefore the *Sequel to the Judgements on Calligraphy* might have been added by Zhu Changwen himself during a later revision of the *Collection of the Ink Pond*, or, if the 1568 and 1733 printed editions were based upon handwritten copies modified by later editors, it could have been added after Zhu Changwen's death, perhaps by his students or relatives.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FORBIDDEN CLASSIC OF THE JADE HALL

In the indexes of the 1580 and 1733 editions of the *Collection of the Ink Pond*, we find that in the second part of the section on brush technique, three texts by Zhang Huaiguan are listed: the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*, the *Brushwork Technique* (*Yongbi fa* 用筆法), and the *Precept on Calligraphy* (*Shu jue* 書訣). In the 1733 edition, after the title “*Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*” there appears the phrase “including a preface” (*bing xu* 並序). If we take the index of the 1580 edition as correct, the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* would only correspond to a brief text placed just before the *Methods of the Brushwork*: it is very likely that the so-called “preface” refers instead to that introductory part erroneously inscribed in the index as the proper *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*.

As for the *Precept on Calligraphy*, it corresponds to the second half of the *Impressions of the Brush* (*Bi yi* 筆意), recorded in the second *juan* of the *Swamp of Ink* (*Mo sou* 墨藪; anonymous; ca. tenth century),¹⁶ and in the eighteenth *juan* of the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden* (*Shu yuan jinghua* 書苑菁華), compiled by Chen Si 陳思 (fl. thirteenth century, preface by Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁 [1178–1237]) under the title *Praise on the Impressions of the Brush* (*Bi yi zan* 筆意贊). Although it has become a famous treatise in the history of calligraphy as a separate text, its original parts are actually first found in the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*, therefore, unless we regard it as an addition due to posthumous editions of the *Collection of the Ink Pond*, it shall be considered as one of its elements. In the *Utmost Change* (*Yan ji* 衍極) written by Zheng Biao 鄭杓 (fl. fourteenth century) and annotated by Liu Youding 劉有定 (preface dated January 4, 1323), we find a very useful description of a *Forbidden Classic* (*jin jing* 禁經) being in three *juan*:

... the first one discussing brushwork, the second discussing the varied configurations, and the third one discussing the composition of the structure.¹⁷

¹⁶ In *ZGSHQS* 1, p. 24.

¹⁷ In *ZGSHQS* 2, p. 774.

See below for a discussion of the title “Forbidden Classic.” A text described as such is almost identical to the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* that is recorded in the *Collection of the Ink Pond*.

Besides the division into different sections mentioned in the above quotation, for our purposes the text can otherwise be divided analytically into seven distinct parts:

- 1) an introduction, that is the “preface” mentioned in the 1733 edition, in which the text as a whole is presented and the difficulties involved in the study of calligraphy are briefly treated;
- 2) the *Methods of Brushwork* which contain: the picture of the character *yong* and the description of the eight methods; five additional configurations (*shi* 勢) of strokes, the “hooked wrap” (*gou guo* 鉤裹), “hooked vertical stroke” (*gou nu* 鉤努), “rolled stroke” (*gun bi* 袞筆), “harrowed stroke” (*tai bi* 儻筆), “chopped stroke” (*fēn bi* 奮筆); nine brushwork configurations (*shi*) of the “wrist’s rising and falling technique” (*wanxia qifu zhi fa* 腕下起伏之法), “holding down the brush” (*dun bi* 頓筆), “twisting the brush” (*cuo bi* 挫筆), “driving the tip” (*yu feng* 馭鋒), “squatting the tip” (*dun feng* 蹲鋒), “crouching the tip” (*cun bi* 存鋒), “twirling the tip” (*nü feng* 衄鋒), “flicking the tip” (*ti feng* 趯鋒), “pressing the tip” (*an feng* 按鋒), “spreading the tip” (*jie feng* 揭鋒);
- 3) a series of eleven varied configurations (*yi shi* 異勢), which consist of a brief description of different shapes of basic strokes and components, carrying both models of good practice, and warnings against bad practice. These descriptions concern: the “flaming fire [dots]” (*lie huo* 烈火), “scattered water [dots]” (*san shui* 散水), “horizontal stroke technique” (*le fa* 勒法), “whip-stroke variations” (*ce bian* 策變), “three long-strokes” (*san hua* 三畫), “pecking and releasing” (*zhuo zhan* 啄展), the “*yi*-character foot” (*yi jiao* 乙腳), the “roof top” (*mian tou* 宀頭), “leaning halberd-stroke” (*yi ge* 倚戈), the “*ye*-character foot” (*ye jiao* 頁腳), and “dew and needle [ends of the vertical stroke]” (*chui zhen* 垂針);
- 4) the *Methods for Composing the Structure* (*Jieguo fa* 結裹法), which explains ten different ways of configuring the structure by providing examples of similar characters;
- 5) a concluding note, where the correct study of calligraphy is shortly summarized;
- 6) a poem, which epitomizes the complementary subtleties involved in the practice of calligraphy, which is almost identical to the *Ode of the Perfection of the Mind* (*Xin cheng song* 心成頌) attributed to the Sui (581–618) monk Zhiguo 智果 (d. u.) included in the twentieth *juan* of the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*;
- 7) a brief composition on general topics related to the practice of cal-

igraphy such as the use of paper and ink, and the arrangement of strokes, commonly known as *Praise on the Impressions of the Brush*.

The present article contains as an appendix the first English translation of the theoretical parts of the text, namely sections 1, 2, 5, 6 (of its total of seven sections). In those selected parts we find discussions of the study of calligraphy and its creative process.

ORIGIN OF THE *FORBIDDEN CLASSIC OF THE JADE HALL*

The title of the text per se, *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*, raises important questions. The term “jade hall” (*yutang* 玉堂) is traditionally a euphemism for the imperial palace in general, and it has also been used as an unofficial designation for the Hanlin Academy (*Hanlin yuan* 翰林院), a Tang-dynasty institution (treated specifically below).¹⁸ The term began to be associated with the Hanlin Academy during the ninth century, as we learn from the last line from the *Memories of the Hanlin Academy* (*Hanlin zhi* 翰林志) by Li Zhao 李肇 (fl. beginning of the ninth century) in 819,¹⁹ or from the title of the lost work *Collection of the Jade Hall* (*Yutang ji* 玉堂集) by the Hanlin academician Zheng Tian 鄭畋 (823–882)²⁰ as recorded in the *New Book of the Tang* (*Xin Tang shu* 新唐書).²¹ Evidently, the title “Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall” can be interpreted as “*Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy*” (*Hanlin jin jing* 翰林禁經). In fact, as we know from various sources, the *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy* is indeed the title of other works on calligraphic technique which have been only partially recorded in historical sources and calligraphic compendia. This is the case, for example, of the *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy* in one *juan* attributed to Li Yangbing 李陽冰 (ca. 721–ca. 785) recorded in the *General Index of the Chongwen* [*Bibliographic Catalogue*] (*Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目),²² and of the anonymous *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* in three *juan*, whose title is registered in the *Monograph of Classics and Books* in the *History of the*

¹⁸ Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1984), p. 594.

¹⁹ French translation with Chinese text by Frederic Bischoff, *La forêt des pinceaux: Étude sur l'Académie de Han-lin sous la Dynastie des T'ang et traduction du Han lin tche* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1963), p. 87.

²⁰ Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) and Song Qi 宋祁 (996–1061), *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975) j. 185, p. 5401.

²¹ *Xin Tang shu*, j. 60, p. 1608. On the jade hall, see also Zhou Xunchu 周勛初 “*Yutang xianhua kao*” 玉堂閒話考, *Xibei shifan daxue bao* 西北師範大學報 (1988.3), p. 29.

²² Wang Yaochen 王堯臣 (ca. 1003–ca. 1058) et al., *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目 (20 *juan*, 1041, Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1937) j. 1, p. 40.

Song.²³ No text bearing this title has been fully recorded in any source we are aware of today, hence it is not possible to compare it with the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*. However, as discussed below, there are several quotations in other texts which suggest the idea that the title *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy* was used to refer to at least some content of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* itself. For the sake of convenience, then, we will use the compound “Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall” to address the text recorded in the *Collection of the Ink Pond*, whereas the title “Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy” will be referred to those texts bearing the compound Hanlin in their title.

In the *Discussion on Adjusting the Stirrups* (*Bodeng xu* 撥鐙序) by Lin Yun 林韞 (fl. mid-ninth century), included in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*, we find several sentences quoted from a certain *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy*, which are not recorded elsewhere:

The *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy* says: “Notable is for the brush to [wield] richly from the left, [whereas the act of] writing should concentrate on slowness and unsmoothness. This is the way of the sovereign and the minister. In general strokes do not rely upon restrictions for length and distance. It is just necessary not to stop their momentum, in order to make sinews and bones connected to each other. The idea comes before the [wielding of the] brush, and only after [the idea has risen] should one write a character. In case [the strokes] are even, straight or similar to each other, their shape will be [like] that of an abacus. Hence such brushstrokes are not those of [a work of] calligraphy.”²⁴

Furthermore, the calligraphic sources record many texts bearing in their titles the compound “forbidden classic” (*jin jing*). In the *Garden of Calligraphy* (*Fashu yuan* 法書苑),²⁵ compiled by Zhou Yue 周越 (fl. first half eleventh century) around the 1030s, for example, we find a few quotations of a certain *Forbidden Classic*. Although the *Garden of Calligraphy* has not been transmitted to the present day, the *Collection of Quotations* (*Lei shuo* 類說), compiled by Zeng Zao 曾慥 (1091–1155) around 1136,²⁶ still contains forty-two citations from it. One of these

²³ *Song shi*, j. 202, p. 5079.

²⁴ *Shu yuan jinghua*, j. 16.

²⁵ Work also recorded in the *History of the Song as Garden of Calligraphy of Past and Modern Times* (*Gujin fashu yuan* 古今法書苑), *Song shi*, j. 202, p. 5075. On Zhou Yue and his *Garden of Calligraphy*, see Chen Zhiping 陳志平, “Zhou Yue Gujin Fashu yuan kao lun,” 周越古今法書苑考論, *Wenxian* 文獻 (2008.3), pp. 93–99.

²⁶ Rpt. of the 1626 edn. in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1988), j. 62, pp. 990–95.

concerns “[Wang] Yishao (i.e., Wang Xizhi 王羲之, 303–361) working specifically at the character *yong*” (Yishao *pian gong yong zi* 逸少偏工永字). It reads as follows:

The *Forbidden Classic* says: “The eight methods arose when clerical-script characters first [were implemented].”²⁷ Li Yangbing says: “As for Wang Yishao practicing calligraphy, he spent fifteen years working specifically at the character *yong*. Through the configurations of the eight methods it is possible to comprise all characters.”²⁸

This passage is not very different from the content of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* as well (see below), and is almost identical to the starting columns of another text, entitled simply the *Eight Methods of the Character Yong* (*Yong zi ba fa* 永字八法), included in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*.²⁹ Hence from the passage we understand that besides the “forbidden classic” recorded in Zhu Changwen’s *Collection of the Ink Pond*, another one was known in the first half of the eleventh century. In relation to Zhou Yue’s *Garden of Calligraphy*, Zhu Changwen indeed tells us an interesting fact in his *Sequel to the Judgements on Calligraphy*:

Zhou Yue ... once composed the *Garden of Calligraphy*. I have searched for this book many times, but I have not been able to obtain it.³⁰

The preceding remark shows that, while compiling the *Collection of the Ink Pond*, that is in the years prior to 1066 (or prior at least to 1074 when he completed the *Sequel*, if we prefer to consider the *Collection of the Ink Pond* as the result of Zhu Changwen’s further editing), Zhu Changwen had no notion of the content of the *Garden of Calligraphy* and therefore could not have taken from it any references regarding

²⁷ The *Monograph on Brush and Ink* (*Hanmo zhi* 翰墨志) by the first Southern Song emperor Zhao Gou 趙構 (1107–1187, posthumous title Gaozong 高宗, r. 1127–1162) for the first time categorizes the scripts as they are done today: “As for literati writing characters, there are five scripts consisting of the correct *zheng* 正 (standard), semi-cursive *xing* 行, cursive *cao* 草, clerical *li* 隸, and *zhuan* 篆”; *ZGSHQS* 2, p. 2. During the Tang the character *li* 隸 was used to refer to the standard script (*kaishu*) and clerical script was called *bafen* 八分, as mentioned in the *Manual of Calligraphy* (*Shu pu* 書譜) by Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (ca. 646–ca. 690), column 109, and in Zhang Huaiguan’s *Judgements on Calligraphy*, j. 1, in *Essential Records of Calligraphy* (*Fashu yao lu* 法書要錄) by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (ca. 815–ca. 877), 10 *juan*, ca. 845 (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin meishu chubanshe, 2004), j. 7, pp. 230–34.

²⁸ *Lei shuo*, pp. 993–94. The passage is also cited, as a quotation from the *Garden of Calligraphy*, in the *Study on the Orchid Pavilion* [*Calligraphy*] (*Lanting kao* 蘭亭考) by Sang Shichang 桑世昌 (preface dated 1209), in *ZGSHQS* 2, p. 586.

²⁹ See *Shu yuan jinghua*, j. 2.

³⁰ *Mochi bian*, j. 3, p. 493.

the *Forbidden Classic*. Hence, it is clear that a certain text entitled “Forbidden Classic” must have been popular amongst the world of Chinese literati throughout the eleventh century.

Chen Si’s *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden* contains most of the pre-Song texts on calligraphic technique, and it is thus a very important source of information. In addition, in its Southern Song edition kept at the National Library of China in Beijing, this collection of texts is the earliest extant edition of any printed text on calligraphy known today (while Sun Guoting’s manuscript *Manual of Calligraphy* [687] is the oldest of all). By surveying the occurrences of the references to the (*Forbidden*) *Classic* found therein, we have the following list.

In the second section on the *Technique of Calligraphy* (*Shu fa* 書法), we find several references regarding the *Forbidden Classic* (*Fin jing*), which were transmitted in four different sources, as follows:

1. *Items found in the Discussion on Brush Technique* (Xu bifa 叙筆法)

The *Forbidden Classic* says: “[If one] possesses a painstaking [attitude], but no personality, the spirit [in his calligraphy] will not arise. [If one] possesses personality, but no painstaking [attitude], his spirit [in calligraphy] will not vary. After possessing these two qualities [hard-working attitude and personality], it is then possible to fully achieve the brilliant vigour of the ancient [masters].” It also says: “Second is to distinguish the configurations of [brushstrokes], third is to compose the structure. All the three characteristics being acquired, then one’s [writing] can be considered calligraphy.”³¹

The first of the two quotations cannot be found in any other texts earlier than the present one, but it is cited in later works on calligraphic technique, such as the *Analysis of Calligraphy* (*Fashu kao* 法書考; preface dated 1331) by Sheng Ximing 盛熙明 (fl. thirteenth century).³² The second one, however, is identical to the following passage from the last part of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*:

First is brushwork, second is to distinguish the configurations [of brushstrokes], third is to compose the structure. All the three characteristics being acquired, then one’s [writing] can be considered calligraphy.³³

³¹ *Shu yuan jinghua*, j. 2.

³² *Fashu kao*, Qing dynasty (1644–1911) anonymous handwritten copy in Zhang Yuanji 張元濟 et al., ed., *Sibu congkan xu bian* 四部叢刊續編 (vol. 3255, Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1934), j. 6, p. 1.

³³ *Mochi bian*, j. 2, p. 151.

2. *Items from the anonymous* Brushwork Technique of the Secret Discussions of the Hanlin [Academy] in Twenty-four Paragraphs (Hanlin milun ershisi tiao yongbi fa 翰林密論二十四條用筆法)

These are five comments, each of which begins with the phrase “The Forbidden Classic says” (for convenience not stated here):

The dot-stroke should be like a sharp-drill inscribing metal.

The long stroke should be like a long awl cutting a stone.

The suspending needle should be like a long awl pinning down the earth.

The united flying [dots] should be like an arrangement of geese blocking the autumn [wind].

The right-falling stroke should be like a vivid snake crossing a [stream of] water.³⁴

The first two quotations are similar to the following sentence from the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*: “How cannot the dot-stroke be like a sharp drill inscribing metal, and the long stroke resemble a long awl cutting a stone!”

There are no other direct references or parallels to the third and fourth quotations in any other texts, and the last item is only slightly different from a sentence found in the anonymous *Method and Diagram of the Arrangement of Brushwork* (*Yongbi zhen tu fa* 用筆陣圖法) included in the *Swamp of Ink*:

Every time executing a released longitudinal stroke [i.e., right falling stroke], it should resemble a startled snake diving into the water.³⁵

3. *Item in the Eight Methods of the Character Yong* (Yong zi ba fa)

The *Forbidden Classic* says: “The eight methods arose when clerical-script characters first [were implemented]. They have been transmitted from Cui [Yuan], Zhang [Zhi 芝, d. 192], Zhong [You 繇, 151–232], and Wang [Xizhi]. What they apply is comprised in the ten thousand characters, and it is what must be certainly understood in the way of the ink. The Sui [581–618] Buddhist monk Zhiyong [fl. seventh century] emitted their principles, teaching them to the [vice]-director [of the Palace Library] Yu Shinan

³⁴ *Shu yuan jinghua*, j. 2.

³⁵ Text corresponding, except for the last five characters of the sentence quoted (“galloping hooves on the move” 足行之趨驟), to the more famous Wang Xizhi’s *Colophon to the Diagram of the Arrangement of the Brush* (*Wang Xizhi ti Bizhen tu hou* 王羲之題筆陣圖後) included in the *Fashu yao lu*, j. 1, pp. 7–9, and also comprised as *Diagram of the Arrangement of the Brush by Wang Xizhi of the Jin* (*Jin Wang Xizhi bizhen tu* 晉王羲之筆陣圖) in the *Collection of the Ink Pond*. See *Mo sou*, j. 1; *Fashu yao lu* (10 juan, ca. 845, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin meishu chubanshe, 2004); *Mochi bian*, j. 1, pp. 91–94.

[558–638], thereafter they were transmitted and made popular, [so that] they got preserved.”³⁶

The first three sentences are almost identical to the following passage from the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*:

The eight methods arose when clerical-script characters first [were implemented]. Since Cui Ziyu (i.e., Cui Yuan, 77–142) of the Later Han (25–220), and after passing through Zhong [You] and Wang [Xizhi], they have been transmitted and applied [in the intervening epochs]. The eight forms are comprised in [all] the ten thousand characters, and for the Way (*dao*) of the ink, it is something impossible to understand all at once.

The sentence from the above passage concerning the Buddhist monk Zhiyong is not a quotation from any known text earlier than the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the whole excerpt as it appears in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden* is also found in many other works, such as the *Study on the Orchid Pavilion [Calligraphy] (Lanting kao 蘭亭考)* compiled by Sang Shichang 桑世昌 (fl. early thirteenth century, preface dated 1209, but very likely full of posthumous additions),³⁷ the *Analysis of Calligraphy* by Sheng Ximing,³⁸ and the *Essentials of the History of Calligraphy (Shu shi huiyao 書史會要)*, edited by Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl. fourteenth century, preface dated 1376).³⁹

4. *Item in juan 16 of the Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*

Here we find the above-mentioned text *Discussion on Adjusting the Stirrups* by Lin Yun, which quotes the *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy* (excerpt recorded above).

There are no mentions of such a passage in other calligraphic texts, except for the famous statement about the “idea [of the character] comes before the brush [begins to write]” 意在筆前 and that of the “resemblance with the abacus” 狀如算子 which are almost identical to a passage from the *Colophon by Wang Youjun* (i.e., Wang Xizhi) to the *Diagram of the Arrangement of the Brush by Wei Furen* (*Wang Youjun ti Wei Furen Bizhen tu hou* 王右軍題衛夫人筆陣圖後).⁴⁰

³⁶ *Shu yuan jinghua*, j. 2.

³⁷ *Lanting kao*, j. 4, in *ZGSHQS* 2, p. 586.

³⁸ *Fashu kao*, j. 4, p. 1.

³⁹ *Shu shi huiyao* (Hongwu 洪武 [1368–1398] edn., 9 *juan*, 1376; Shanghai: Shanghai guji shudian, 1979) j. 9, p. 4.

⁴⁰ “Let the sinews and the veins be mutually connected. The idea [of the character] comes before the brush [begins to write it], thereafter let the character be written. In case [strokes] are straight and similar, their shape would be that of an abacus. If the top and the bottom [of

The anonymous *Secret Discussions of the Hanlin Academy in Twenty-four Paragraphs*, contained in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*,⁴¹ also mention a certain *Ancient Classic* (*Gu jing* 古經) whose content cannot be found in any other texts.⁴² Finally, we find another quotation from the *Forbidden Classic* recorded in the *Utmost Change*, which is almost identical to the *Eight Methods of the Character Yong* included in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*, as we read in Liu Youding's note:

The *Forbidden Classic* says: "The eight methods arose when clerical-script characters first [were implemented]. They have been transmitted from Cui [Yuan], Zhang [Zhi], Zhong [You], and Wang [Xizhi]. What they apply is comprised in the ten thousand characters, and it is what must be absolutely understood in the way of the ink. The Sui Buddhist monk Zhiyong transmitted those principles to Yu Shinan."⁴³

Summarizing the evidence presented above, we can conclude that all the citations related to the *Forbidden Classic*, except for the quotation recorded in the *Discussion on Adjusting the Stirrups*, seem to be part of a relatively homogeneous corpus of texts on the technique of calligraphy. We can therefore hypothesize that the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*, far from being the original and unique text bearing this title, has been one of the different versions of a broader and very likely "open" text dealing with the technique and study of calligraphy, which was somewhat related to the eight methods, and which for the sake of convenience we will call by the general term "Forbidden Classic." The text, in whatever edition, must have been a collection of adages which presumably appeared sometime in the ninth century, and had significantly spread by the eleventh century. Both the two great Tang collections of texts on calligraphy, the *Essential Records of Calligraphy* (*Fashu yao lu* 法書要錄) by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (ca. 815–ca. 877) and the anonymous *Swamp of Ink* in fact do not bear any mention of the "Forbidden Classic." Although this of course does not mean that all Tang dynasty texts on calligraphy are to be found in these two collections,⁴⁴ we can

a character] are upright and foursquare, and its front and rear are neat and even, this is not [to be considered] as calligraphy"; *Fashu yao lu*, j. 1, p. 8.

⁴¹ *Shu yuan jinghua*, j. 2.

⁴² Sheng Ximing's *Analysis of Calligraphy* has two records almost identical to the *Ancient Classic*. *Juan 4* of the *Analysis of Calligraphy* contains a section on the eight methods and one for the components (*pianpang* 偏旁), whose content is directly excerpted from the *Eight Methods of the Character Yong* and the *Secret Discussions of the Hanlin Academy in Twenty-four Paragraphs* included in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*.

⁴³ In *ZGSHQS* 2, p. 774.

⁴⁴ Entitled "Essential Records," we might presume that Zhang Yanyuan did not include all

hypothesize that the “Forbidden Classic” belongs to a stream of texts on the study of the calligraphic technique which did not obtain wide recognition in the world of Chinese literati until the eleventh century. Perhaps it is then no wonder that the *Comprehensive Monographs* (*Tong zhi* 通志) by Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1106–1162) records in its *Outline of Classics and Books* (*Yiwen lue* 藝文略) a *Forbidden Classic on Calligraphy* (*Shu jin jing* 書禁經) in one *juan*, which might very likely be a different version of a text analogous to the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* on the technique of calligraphy.⁴⁵ Apart from the similarities between Zhu Changwen’s 1066 *Collection of the Ink Pond* and its roughly contemporary *Garden of Calligraphy* by Zhou Yue (completed ca. 1030s), in fact, we also notice that two other Song-era (960–1279) works, Chen Si’s *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden* (prior to 1237) and Sang Shichang’s *Study on the Orchid Pavilion* [*Calligraphy*] (early twelfth century), do share a considerable number of textual similarities to the “Forbidden Classic.” Of these, the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden* was perhaps even cut and published by its editor Chen Si himself⁴⁶ in the first half of the thirteenth century and thus probably attained wider recognition than the other three.

Ultimately, it is no wonder that successive sources widely quoted the texts recorded in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*, which remained the largest source of calligraphic texts before the appearance of the *Garden of Calligraphy from Ancient and Modern Times* (*Gujin fashu yuan* 古今法書苑) compiled by Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590),⁴⁷ the *Collection of Calligraphy and Painting of the Peiwen Study* (*Peiwen zhai shuhua pu* 佩文齋書畫譜) compiled by Sun Yueban 孫岳頒 (1639–1708) and others in 1708,⁴⁸ and the *A Record of One of the Six Arts* (*Liu yi zhi yi lu* 六藝之一錄) compiled by Ni Tao 倪濤 (d. u.) during the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ As we have previously discussed, the *Collection of the Ink Pond* did not circulate in printed editions before 1568, therefore its availability beyond the circle of Zhu Changwen’s friends and students can be seriously questioned. No matter how widespread the *Collection of the Ink Pond* became from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, we are still to regard the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* as indeed the earliest text

the extant texts on calligraphy in general, and, in fact, it does not record Wei Heng’s highly influential *Shi on the Four Calligraphic Scripts* which is found, on the other hand, in the *Swamp of Ink*.

⁴⁵ *Tong zhi* (*Shi tong* 十通 edn., Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1962), j. 64, p. 769.

⁴⁶ *Chūgoku hankoku zuroku* 中國版刻圖錄 (Kyoto: Hōyū shoten; Tokyo: Hatsubaijo Kyūko shoin, 1983; first published Beijing tushuguan, ed. [Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1961]), p. 17.

⁴⁷ 76 *juan*, in *ZGSHQS* 4, pp. 1–712.

⁴⁸ 100 *juan*, SKQS edn. (rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991).

⁴⁹ 404 *juan*, SKQS edn. (rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991).

we are aware of which fully records and discusses a series of technical issues on how to trace brushstrokes, adjust components, and arrange the structure of characters.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE *FORBIDDEN CLASSIC OF THE JADE HALL*

Authorship of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* is obscure; and, as mentioned, Zhu Changwen, who collated the text, attributed it to Zhang Huaiguan of Tang times. However, Zhu was doubtful about Zhang's having actually composed it; this we learn from the following gloss from the *Collection of the Ink Pond* (coming at the end of the second part of the section on brush technique):

Master Zhu said: "Zhang Huaiguan's calligraphy was not known during the Tang, not even such an elaborate discussion on the shape [of characters] and an explanation of the technique [of the brush]. During the period of the Prosperous Tang (i.e., the first half of the eighth century: Zhang Huaiguan's era) the study of calligraphy greatly flourished. The various honourable [masters] continued the earlier [masters' calligraphy]: all of them examined [the questions of calligraphy] and had proof [of what they were talking about], [therefore] their [discussions] did not give strained interpretations [of things]. Alas! If I were let to meet the various honourable masters of that time, then how would not it be possible for me to be equal to them? Now although I have read those extant texts, they are erroneous and in disorder, thus causing difficulties for people to understand them. Nevertheless, I have collected these compositions and roughly edited them in a set of texts, relying on what I have learnt, in order to provide them for reference and reading. As for the process of transmission [of the brush technique] and the multitude of the [studying] methods, scholars should take the appropriate [parts] amongst those [found in these texts].⁵⁰ The *Classic of Poetry* says: 'While picking the turnip and the radish, one should not take its inferior part.' This is what is meant here."⁵¹

Besides the reference to Zhang Huaiguan's authorship, some sources relate the *Forbidden Classic* (of whatever edition) to the Tang emperor Li Shimin 李世民 (599–649, r. 626–649; posthumous title Taizong 太宗). In the *Complete Prose Texts of the Tang* (*Quan Tang wen* 全

⁵⁰ Quotation translated by James Legge as follows: "Radish and mustard plants are used, though some be poor"; Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong: Lane, Crawford & Co.; London: Trubner & Co., 1871) vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 55.

⁵¹ *Mochi bian*, j. 2, pp. 160–61.

唐文, completed 1814) the preface of the extant *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* is placed under the works of Li Shimin and is titled *Preface to the Forbidden Classic* (*jin jing xu* 禁經序).⁵² The association between Li Shimin and the *Forbidden Classic* is supported by other sources as well. In the above-mentioned *Utmost Change*, for example, Liu Youding gives a detailed explanation of the origin of the *Forbidden Classic*:

The *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy* expresses views on brushwork by various masters.

[Liu Youding's commentary:] The *Secret Discussions of the Hanlin Academy in Twenty-four Paragraphs*, *Hanlin milun ershisi tiao* discusses brushwork technique. As for the *Forbidden Classic*, Taizong of the Tang collected the discourses on [calligraphic] technique by Wang Xizhi, Yu Shinan and over thirty other masters, and composed [a text] in three *juan*: the first one discusses brushwork, the second discusses the varied configurations, and the third discusses the composition of the structure. Its content was in great part prohibited by imperial order and did not circulate, [thus] it was called "forbidden classic."⁵³

In the *Addenda to the Classic of Calligraphy* (*Shu jing buyi* 書經補遺) compiled by Lü Zongjie 呂宗傑 (preface dated October 28, 1351), a text titled *Original Meaning of Calligraphy* (*Fashu ben xiang* 法書本象), written by Chen Yiceng 陳繹曾 (fl. first half of the fourteenth century), which records the creation and diffusion of the *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy*, clearly refers to Li Shimin:

Taizong of the Tang established the Three Institutes (i.e., the Institute for the Advancement of Literature, the Historiography Institute, and the Academy of Scholarly Worthies),⁵⁴ and ordered Yu Shinan, Ouyang Xun, Chu Liang (555–647), Yu Zhining (588–

⁵² *Quan Tang wen*, j. 10, p. 121.

⁵³ *Yan*, j. 4, in *ZGSHQS* 2, p. 787.

⁵⁴ Charles Hucker considers the "Three Institutes" as a Song-dynasty denomination for the Historiography Institute (Shi guan 史館), the Institute for the Glorification of Literature (Zhaowen guan 昭文館), and the Academy of Scholarly Worthies (Jixian yuan 集賢院). Denis Twitchett translates the term San guan 三館 as "Three Academies," which he considers an unusual designation for those three institutes. The offices were the three main departments in charge of the compilation and recording of official histories. Twitchett in fact states that the normal meaning of "San guan" referred to the "three principal schools of in the Imperial University system," which he unfortunately did not specify. In our passage, Chen Yiceng mentions "copyists" (*shu shou* 書手), probably a reference to the copyists of official documents, rather than those involved in the teaching of students in the State University. Whatever reference is used, the "Three Institutions" cannot be directly linked to Li Shimin: the Institute for the Advancement of Literature was founded by Li Shimin in 621 when he was still heir-apparent, and the Historiography Institute in 629 when he had already become emperor; but the Academy of Scholarly Worthies was originally established in 717 by Li Longji under the name Academy of Heaven (Qianyuan yuan 乾元院). See Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*,

665) and others to write the *Secret Discussions of the Hanlin Academy* (*Hanlin milun*) [in order to] teach the copyists in the Three Institutes. Thereafter, Xuanzong (Li Longji 李隆基; 685–762, r. 712–756) ordered Zhang Yanyuan (ca. 817–ca. 877) to enlarge and revise it, and in addition to compose the *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy*. [Zhang Yanyuan] did not have the time to present them to the throne, for the Yuyang 漁陽 revolt (i.e., the An Lushan 安祿山 Rebellion, 755–763)⁵⁵ broke out, so [the texts] were kept in [Zhang] Yanyuan's house. With the Song dynasty, [Zhang] Yanyuan's grandson [Zhang] Xiaoxiang (1132–1170) gained fame through calligraphy. Both Zhu (Xi 熹, 1130–1200) and Zhang (Shi 拭, 1133–1180) learned calligraphy from [Zhang] Xiaoxiang. [Zhang] Xiaoxiang's grandson [Zhang] Jizhi (1186–1263) was also very famous for [his skill in] calligraphy. His great-paternal grandfather's younger brother [Zhang] Wenlin passed the imperial examination at the age of twenty-one. In his adolescence he had much leisure time during which he was dedicated to matters of art, and tried his best to teach [Zhang] Jizhi. He sought the two texts without success, and finally obtained them with a cunning plan. There was a Taoist Chen Si from Qiantang 錢塘 (present day Zhejiang), who liked to attend [Zhang] Jizhi, and he managed to glimpse part of [the texts]. Those found in [Chen Si's] *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden* are only one tenth of them.⁵⁶

The above two passages show that the writers did not perceive certain historical facts, namely, that Li Longji and Zhang Yanyuan lived 100 years apart. Also, the writers overinterpreted the word “forbidden.” Probably because of their wish to explain the term “forbidden classic,” the two authors inferred from the word that it could be related to a Tang court commission or to some other strictly official context. Yet, no primary source bears a record of Li Shimin promoting the compilation of works on calligraphy, although he was a great sponsor of this art. Li Shimin and the early Tang court calligraphers were, it seems, merely placed in a conjectural role in an attempt to give status to a certain text on calligraphy.⁵⁷

pp. 155, 398; Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History Under the Tang* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), pp. 13–14, 16, 24.

⁵⁵ Addressed as such in the *Song of Everlasting Sorrow* (*Chang hen ge* 長恨歌), by Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846); English translation by Innes Herdan with parallel Chinese text, in *Three Hundred Tang Poems* (Taipei: The Far East Book Co. Ltd., 1984), pp. 147–48.

⁵⁶ In *ZGSHQS* 2, p. 937.

⁵⁷ Stephen J. Goldberg, “Court Calligraphy of the Early Tang Dynasty,” *Artibus Asiae* 49

This kind of speculation reaches even higher degrees of surmise in *Hanxi's Comprehensive Explanations on Calligraphy* (*Hanxi shufa tongjie* 漢谿書法通解) by Ge Shouzhi 戈守智 (*zi* Hanxi 漢谿; 1720–1780, woodblock edition dated 1750), where we find an explanation regarding the *Forbidden Classic*:

The *Monograph on the Hundred Officials of the Tang* says: “In the fourth year of the Wude 武德 reign period (621), Taizu (Li Yuan 李淵; 566–635, r. 618–626) established the Institute for the Cultivation of Literature within the Chancellery (Menxiasheng 門下省). In the ninth year (626) this was renamed Institute for the Advancement of Literature. In the first year of the Zhenguan 貞觀 reign period (627) [Li Yuan] summoned twenty-four among the sons of the officials from the capital of the fifth rank and above who loved calligraphy to practice calligraphy in the Institute. The technique of calligraphy of the *Forbidden Classic* was then presented in order to teach them.⁵⁸

This clearly shows two faults, the first one is “Taizu” 太祖, a mistake for Gaozu 高祖, Li Yuan’s posthumous title.⁵⁹ The second one regards the sentence where the so-called “forbidden classic” is mentioned. In reality the original text of the *New Book of the Tang* reads “presented the calligraphies from the forbidden inside (i.e., the Imperial Palace) whereby to teach them.”⁶⁰ A mention of the authorship of the *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy* is found in the *Bibliographic Record from the Commandery Studio* (*Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志) by Chao Gongwu 晁公武 (ca. 1105–1180) under the category “minor learning” (*xiaoxue* 小學), where Li Yangbing is mentioned:

The *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy* in eight *juan* was written by Li Yangbing of the Tang. It discusses what is prohibited about brushwork and the configurations of calligraphy, therefore it has been called as such.⁶¹

Given such a long history of differences about the origins of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* and Zhang Huaiguan’s purported authorship, we will benefit from looking at the problem from an exter-

(1988–1989), pp. 189–90.

⁵⁸ *Hanxi shufa tongjie*, j. 3, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Liu Xu 劉昫 (887–946) et al., ed., *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (200 *juan*, 946, 16 vols., Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975) j. 1, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Xin Tang shu*, j. 47, p. 1209.

⁶¹ 20 *juan*, in Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) ed., *Wanwei biechang* 宛委別藏 (120 vols., Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1988) 54, p. 109.

nal, historical, point of view. The reason for the attribution to Zhang Huaiguan very likely comes from the title of the text itself. The Hanlin Academy was an important literary and editorial organization established by the Tang,⁶² which, especially after the An Lushan rebellion, exerted a great influence upon court politics.⁶³ The Academy was the place where duty-assignment (*chaiqian* 差遣) officials with pre-existing posts, who had been “summoned for their competence and skills,” gathered in preparation to serve the emperor.⁶⁴ Its history officially commences at the beginning of Li Longji’s reign, when the title “academician waiting orders” (Hanlin *daizhao* 翰林待詔) was instituted, covering a wide range of skills, from literature (*cixue* 詞學) to the mastership in the Confucian classics (*jingshu* 經書), Buddhism and Taoism (*seng dao* 僧道), and calligraphy and chess (*shu yi* 書奕 [弈]).⁶⁵ During the Yuanhe 元和 reign period (805–820), as discussed by David McMullen, “tenure in the Hanlin, combined with directing rescripts, proved time and again to be rewarding in career terms. ... The effect of this combination of great political power and recognized literary ability was that the Hanlin posts acquired enormous prestige.”⁶⁶

Considering the importance of the Hanlin Academy in the ninth century, we can imagine that a text on calligraphy that was associated with the Hanlin Academy was at that time quite “believable,” in the sense that it would have had relatively more “appeal” to the reader than a text with a non-official sounding title, such as the hypothetical *Discourse on Brush Technique* (*Bifa lun* 筆法論), *On Brushwork Technique* (*Yongbi fa* 用筆法), and so forth. It is likely that such a text then became associated with a figure who was in turn associated with both the Hanlin Academy and the study of calligraphy. Zhang Huaiguan was hence suitable to be thought of as author of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*. Zhang Huaiguan was in fact the author of various texts on calligraphy (above, I mentioned *Judgements on Calligraphy*); and he was also appointed as Hanlin academician in attendance (Hanlinyuan *gongfeng* 翰林院供奉) during the Kaiyuan 開元 reign period (713–742).⁶⁷ In this way, a text on calligraphy could be linked with both the political and cultural prestige of the Hanlin Academy and the tradition of calligraphic

⁶² On the origin of the Hanlin Academy, see Bischoff, *La forêt des pinceaux*.

⁶³ David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1988), p. 16.

⁶⁴ Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982), *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 (100 *juan*, 961; Taipei: Shijie, 1960), *j.* 57, p. 977.

⁶⁵ *Jiu Tang shu*, *j.* 43, p. 1853.

⁶⁶ McMullen, *State and Scholars*, p. 240.

⁶⁷ Title recorded in the “Monograph on Classics and Books” of the *Xin Tang shu*, *j.* 57, p. 1450.

expertise epitomized by Zhang Huaiguan. As for the author associated to the *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy*, Li Yangbing, we know that at the age of fifty-seven (ca. 777) he was on a duty assignment as academician of the Academy of Scholarly Worthies (Jixian *xueshi* 集賢學士).⁶⁸ The latter academicians, due to the heavy work load of the Secretariat (Zhongshusheng 中書省) during the first years of Li Longji's reign, were cooperating with the Hanlin academicians in attendance for the editing of imperial edicts (*zhi zhao shu chi* 制造書敕).⁶⁹ We can infer that due to Li Yangbing's frequent contacts with the Hanlin Academy, someone not acquainted with Li Yangbing's life might have mistaken him for a Hanlin academician himself, and thus ascribed the *Forbidden Classic* to him. Li Yangbing is most renown for his expertise in the *zhuan* script (*zhuanshu* 篆書), and for his re-arrangement of the *Discussion of Single Characters and Explanation of Compound Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字).⁷⁰ At the same time, though, we know from the *Catalogue of Calligraphies* [Compiled during] the *Xuanhe Reign Period* [1119–1125] (*Xuanhe shupu* 宣和書譜) that Li Yangbing was the author of the *Discourse on Brush Technique* (*Bifa lun* 筆法論), which was said to “have distinguished the strokes of calligraphy.”⁷¹

Moreover, from the above-mentioned *General Index to the Chongwen* [*Bibliographic Catalogue*] we also learn that Li Yangbing was associated with the *Forbidden Classic of the Hanlin Academy*. In addition, the same *Catalogue of Calligraphies* [Compiled during] the *Xuanhe Reign Period* also bears another interesting mention about Li Yangbing and the technique of the brush in general:

Qian Ruoshui 錢若水 [960–1003] used to say: “Amongst the ancients who were skilled at calligraphy, very few had obtained [precepts about] the technique of brushwork. Lu Xisheng 陸希聲 [fl. second half of the ninth century] of the Tang obtained them, and they consisted in five words in total: to hold, to press, to hook, to conform, to hold back.” [Lu Xisheng] said that [these precepts] had come from the Two Wangs (i.e., Wang Xizhi and his son Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 [344–386]), and he had got them from [Li] Yangbing.⁷²

⁶⁸ See Zhu Guantian 朱關田, “Li Yangbing shiji xi nian gao” 李陽冰事跡系年稿, *Tang dai shufajia nianpu* 唐代書法家年譜 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), p. 504.

⁶⁹ *Xin Tang shu*, j. 46, p. 1183.

⁷⁰ On Li Yangbing's calligraphy, see Zhu Guantian, *Zhongguo shufa shi: Sui Tang jun* 中國書法史: 隋唐卷 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), pp. 123–27.

⁷¹ *Xuanhe shu pu*, j. 2, p. 12.

⁷² *Ibid.* j. 4, p. 33. The passage is similar to the *Brush Technique Transmitted by Lu Xisheng* [fl. end of the ninth century] (*Lu Xisheng chuan bifa* 陸希聲傳筆法), in the *Collection of the Ink*

From this excerpt, together with the mention of the *Discourse on Brush Technique*, we thus learn that Li Yangbing, at least during the Northern Song dynasty, was considered one of the scholars who had gained and transmitted brushwork technique. Therefore it is quite comprehensible that some calligraphic sources associate Li Yangbing's name with the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE *FORBIDDEN CLASSIC*

Despite its political and literary prestige, the Hanlin Academy was not always considered as a place where highly refined calligraphy was produced. In the *Records of Talks of Mister Jia* (*Jia shi tan lu* 賈氏談錄), referring to Jia Huangzhong 賈黃中 (941–996), compiled by Zhang Ji 張洎 (933–996), we find the following account of the so-called “calligraphy of the academic style” (*yuanti shu* 院體書):

The literati in the Central Plain mainly use the academic style [of calligraphy] when they exchange ordinary epistles. As for the academic style, during the Zhenyuan 貞元 reign period (785–805) the academician Wu Tongwei 吳通微 (fl. end of the eighth century) was skilled in the semi-cursive and cursive scripts, but their shape resembled that of clerks' writing, therefore it was specially copied by the petty officials of the [Hanlin] Academy. His calligraphy spread to such a great extent that this conventional style which has been handed-down [through all these years] cannot be suppressed even in our present day. It is of the utmost vulgarity!⁷³

Moreover, the above-mentioned *Utmost Change* contains an interesting hint about the so-called academic style:

In the beginning, ever since the Five Dynasties (907–960), the Hanlin Academy was in chaotic times because of continual wars, and the academicians awaiting orders transmitted to each other the academic style. Their characters' configurations were weak and inconsistent, and all the edicts and the inscriptions were not worth a glance. Emperor Taizong of the Song (Zhao Kuangyi 趙匡義; 939–997, r. 976–997) dedicated himself to calligraphy, ... chose seven people who were skilled in calligraphy, and added them as academicians awaiting orders.⁷⁴

Pond, although there is no mention there of Li Yangbing; *Mochi bian*, j. 2, p. 158.

⁷³ In Tao Zongyi (fl. 14th c.), *Shuo fu* 說郛 (100 *juan*, rpt. of 1927 Hanfenlou 涵芬樓 edn., 4 vols., Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1986) j. 9, p. 12.

⁷⁴ *Yan ji*, j. 2, in *ZGSHQS* 2, p. 772.

From these passages we can deduce that during the period from the late eighth to the late tenth century, the calligraphy of the Hanlin Academy, besides the illustrious example provided by Zhang Huaiguan, did not always reflect aesthetic prestige. As we have previously discussed, this was indeed the period when the *Forbidden Classic* most likely originated, hence we might further analyze the question of the text's value.

In a comment to the texts of the first section of the *Methods of the Brush*, Zhu Changwen expresses the opinion that the texts he has collected are but inelegant compositions which can only serve as learning tools for those who do not yet know the basic principles of calligraphy:

Master Zhu said: "As for the supreme perfection of skill (*ji* 技), this is what fathers and masters cannot teach; the supreme splendour of principles (*li* 理) is what written words cannot transmit. In general, [only when] the eyes see that the Way exists, the will is firm and the spirit is condensed, is it then possible to be supreme [in calligraphy]. But then, how can the technique of calligraphy be transmitted! I have intended to make a learning tool for those who have not understood [it] yet. [As for the texts on the] technique of the brush by the various masters which have become widely spread in the world, most of their words are not elegant nor refined. Probably [these texts] were not personally composed by them, but are compositions written by later people according to previous models. Nevertheless, they are much studied and widely known, and so they can be used by students for study [purposes]. Hence I have summarized the essential [compositions] and gathered them as follows, in order to make them available for reading. However [these texts] are fallacious, as they do not fully contain the correct verbiage."⁷⁵

From this passage we can infer, then, that literati like Zhu Changwen were not (at least not officially) involved in compositions of texts in the guise of the *Forbidden Classic*, for they believed that calligraphy's sublime essence simply could not be transmitted through words, but it had to be grasped spiritually. This kind of doubtful warning made by Zhu Changwen towards calligraphy instruction books, however, did not begin with Zhu Changwen himself. Nearly four hundred years before him, Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (ca. 646–ca. 690)⁷⁶ had made a similar statement in his *Manual of Calligraphy* (*Shu pu* 書譜):

⁷⁵ *Mochi bian*, j. 1, p. 136.

⁷⁶ For an analysis of Sun Guoting's dates, see Bi Luo 畢羅 (Pietro De Laurentis), "Sun Guoting shengping kao" 孫過庭生平考, *Shufa congkan* 書法叢刊 108 (2009.2), pp. 73–81.

Those who are dignified [in calligraphy] forget words as they grasp the meaning, and rarely describe the principles. Those who aim to study merely admire the styles and describe the splendour, but although they follow the models, they seem to be quite far from the mark, for they establish their technique in vain and still are not able to put into practice such principles. Although myself a stubborn [student], I provide what I have [managed to] learn, hoping to spread the styles and models from the past and guide the intellectual worthies of the future [generations], eliminating what is complicated and deleting what is in excess, [so that] as soon as one glances at my composition, the mind will understand it.⁷⁷ (Columns 140–146 of the manuscript)

A difference between the approaches by Zhu Changwen and Sun Guoting should be noted. In the era when Sun Guoting wrote, there were very few treatises which actually showed how to practice calligraphy. Sun Guoting's *Manual of Calligraphy*, in fact, is probably the earliest text specifically intended for teaching calligraphy, even though it refers to other didactical texts such as *Diagram of the Disposition of the Brush* (*Bizhen tu* 筆陣圖)⁷⁸ and the *Discourse on the Configuration of the Brush in Ten Chapters* (*Bishi lun shi zhang* 筆勢論十章).⁷⁹ On the other hand, by Zhu Changwen's time there was already a tradition of texts on the study of calligraphy which included the *Diagram on the Dispositions of the Brush*, as well as several texts just after Sun Guoting's time, for example, *Discussion on Calligraphy* (*Lun shu* 論書) by Xu Hao 徐浩 (703–782)⁸⁰ (an academician of the Academy of the Scholarly Worthies)⁸¹ and the *Brush Technique Transmitted by Lu Xisheng* [fl. end of the ninth century] (*Lu Xisheng chuan bifa* 陸希聲傳筆法).⁸² Zhu Changwen, despite his doubt about the quality of such texts, could not but mention them merely to show his coverage of the field, and, much earlier, Sun Guo-

⁷⁷ See the facs. reproduction of the scroll; Tanimura Kisai 谷村憲齋, *Tō Son Katei Sho hu: Shakubun kaisetsu* 唐孫過庭書譜: 釋文解說 (Tokyo: Nigensha, 1979).

⁷⁸ In *Fashu yao lu*, j. 1, *Shu yuan jinghua*, j. 1. On the authenticity of pre-Tang texts on calligraphy, see Zhang Tiangong, "Lüe lun Zhongguo gudai shufa lilun piping zijue de wenti" 略論中國古代書法理論批評自覺的問題, *Zhongguo shufa* 中國書法 (2000.12), pp. 60–64. For a discussion on the *Diagram on the Disposition of the Brush* and similar texts, see Tang Gengyu 唐耕餘, "Bizhen tu fuhua jieduan ji qi neirong" 筆陣圖蛭化階段及其內容, *Shufa congkan* (2000.4), pp. 75–90. On this text, see also Richard Barnhart, "Wei Fu-jen's Pi Chen T'u and the Early Texts on Calligraphy," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 18 (1964), pp. 13–25.

⁷⁹ De Laurentis, "Sun Guoting zhi zhiqi," pp. 112–17.

⁸⁰ In *Fashu yao lu*, j. 3, pp. 116–18.

⁸¹ Zhu, *Sui Tang juan*, p. 130.

⁸² *Mochi bian*, j. 2, pp. 158–59.

ting's *Manual of Calligraphy* mentioned them to display his personal training experience in calligraphy.⁸³ What is interesting about the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* is that the author (or compiler) of the text, perhaps fearing that the literati of his time like Zhu Changwen did not appreciate writings that presented the technical side of calligraphy, seems to have justified himself by titling his work "Forbidden Classic" (*Jin jing*). As if such a treatise were per se a classic, the problem of its legitimacy would consequently be solved in advance by eliminating any ordinary title such as "Discourse on the Brush Technique" and the like. In addition, by implying that such "classic" was "forbidden," the author could by-pass the key question about its perceived legitimacy, since, as a forbidden classic, the text might logically be considered as the product of the imperial entourage. In this way, the author betrays some of the same worry about lacking "dignity" as seen in Sun Guoting's statement, above.

After reading Zhu Changwen's own comments on the two *Methods of the Brush* sections in his *Collection of the Ink Pond*, it is important to ask: what might have been the features in the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* that Zhu Changwen believed to be disordered and incomprehensible, not elegant or refined, and that led him to doubt Zhang Huaiguan's authorship?

First of all, we notice that the text is made up of seven highly disparate sections. While the introductory paragraph and the closing gloss are written with a relatively refined lexicon, the latter even ending with a brief poetical composition, on the other hand the main corpus of the text is composed of pedantic and sometimes simplistic descriptions on how to configure strokes, components, and characters. This is the case in the following three passages, the first two concerning stroke types and the last one about over-all aesthetic value:

The first is called "wrapping hook configuration" (*gou guo* 鉤裹). It requires a circular corner and a swift tip. It is used in the characters *wang* 罔, *min* 閔, and *tian* 田.⁸⁴

... This [stroke] is called flat disposition (*ping bu* 平布), it is vulgar and cannot be used.⁸⁵

... Those characters which are intended to be released, but [at the same time] also retained, are *ren* 人, *ru* 入, *mu* 木, and *huo* 火.⁸⁶

⁸³ De Laurentis, "Sun Guoting zhi zhiqi," p. 115.

⁸⁴ *Mochi bian*, j. 2, p. 139.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, j. 2, p. 144.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, j. 2, p. 150.

Very likely then, sentences like this, so full of prescriptive attitude, were seen by Zhu Changwen as banal adages which would not suit the aesthetic contemplations of literati. In fact, not only do such statements add nothing to the pursuit of aesthetic expression, but also by adding fussy explanations of brushwork and warnings against “vulgarity,” as if real precepts for aesthetical expression could possibly exist, they also showed that they came from a mere pedagogical need to provide basic rules to beginners.

The above evidence leads us to two further questions of the utmost importance: did texts on the technique of calligraphy exist in the pre-Tang period, or did they appear first, and gain greatly in number, only after the seventh century? Moreover, had the attitude towards texts that presented technical instruction always been so skeptical?

The sources in our possession do not provide the sort of information that yields definitive answers. We learn from Yan Zhitui’s 顏之推 (531–591) well-known guide to Confucian values titled *Family Instructions of the Yan Clan* (*Yan shi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓) that practising the standard and cursive scripts was considered a worthwhile and dignified art for young gentlemen.⁸⁷ Yan Zhitui stated: “During my childhood I practised [them] in accordance with our family tradition... .”⁸⁸ We can infer that some kind of precepts regarding the study of calligraphy, at least in those two scripts, might have been set down for young students among the literati families, even if these were quite different from the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*.

In addition, calligraphic education, if not real expertise, gained a certain level of importance in the Tang government’s institutional structure, in part for administrative reasons.⁸⁹ There were certain doctoral examinations (*ju* 舉) that especially focused on etymology (*ming zi* 明字, literally, understanding [written] characters);⁹⁰ and the writing of standard script that was “full of grace and vigour” (*qiu mei* 適美) was one of the criteria applied in the selection examinations (*xuan* 選).⁹¹ An ability in different scripts was also required for appointment as editor

⁸⁷ See Wang Liqi 王利器, ed., *Yan shi jiaxun jijie* 顏氏家訓集解 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), j. 7, p. 567 (in the sect. “On Various Arts” [zayi 雜藝]). English translation by Teng Ssu-Yü, *Family Instructions of the Yen Clan* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. 198.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ On the role of calligraphy in the Tang bureaucratic system, see Han Guopan 韓國盤, “Bu Tianshou Lunyu Zheng shi zhu xieben he Tangdai de shufa” 卜天壽論語鄭氏注寫本和唐代的書法, in idem, *Sui Tang Wudai shi lun ji* 隋唐五代史論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), pp. 442–451; Zhu, *Sui Tang juan*, pp. 49–52.

⁹⁰ *Xin Tang shu*, j. 44, p. 1159.

⁹¹ Ibid., j. 45, p. 1171.

(*jiaoshu lang* 校書郎) and proofreader in the Palace Library (Bishu sheng zhengzi 祕書省正字).⁹² Du You 杜佑 (735–812) wrote in his *Comprehensive Codes* (*Tong dian* 通典) that “People both in the capital and the provinces studied for these examinations.”⁹³

Therefore, if we view the problem of calligraphic teaching in a wider sense, it seems reasonable that during a child’s participation in “elementary schooling” (*xiaoxue* 小學), some precepts on beautiful writing, if not calligraphy per se, would normally have been a main subject of lessons. Yet, this would certainly have depended on the teacher himself, and on his real passion or ability in calligraphy, which was not necessarily part of the teachers’ cultural background. As we read in the *Discussion on Calligraphy* (*Lun shu* 論書) by Li Hua 李華 (d. u.),⁹⁴ a work included in the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden*, in fact such a condition had not always been the case:

Someone gave me some scrolls; in one of these was a chapter titled “Discourse on Elementary Schooling” (*Xiaoxue shuo* 小學說). Its contents roughly said: “The instructor Hongwen was sitting in the teaching hall; his hand was raised, grasping a classic in one *juan*. The students were standing according to the fixed order. As the master finished speaking, he shortly afterwards wrote something and showed it to all the students. He was [evidently] unskilled at calligraphy.”⁹⁵

With the *Anthology of the Calligraphy Garden* (prior to 1237) we see that nearly all the texts that we might ascribe to the “Forbidden Classic tradition” were already extant. A great part of the texts on calligraphic technique transmitted to our day, in fact, are basically re-issues, sometimes with different titles, of those included in Chen Si’s *Anthology*. From the sources we possess, we can conclude that the texts on calligraphic technique were mentioned first in Sun Guoting’s times (mid-seventh century), then they became partially recorded in the *Essential Records of*

⁹² Li Linfu 李林甫 (d. 752) et al., *Tang liu dian* 唐六典 (30 *juan*, 739, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1992), j. 10, p. 300.

⁹³ *Tong dian* (200 *juan*, 801, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1996) j. 15, p. 353. Passage translated in Penelope Herbert, *Examine the Honest, Appraise the Able* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1988), p. 161.

⁹⁴ The only known personage from the Tang named Li Hua is attested in *Epitaph for Former Adjutant of Ruzhou, Master Li of Longxi, with Preface* (*Tang gu Ruzhou sima Longxi Li fujun muzhiming bing xu* 唐故汝州司馬隴西李府君墓誌銘並序) by Guo Ba 郭霸 (d. u.); the text gives Li’s death as March 2, 778, at the age of 56. There is no evidence that these two men called Li Hua are to be considered the same person; see Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 and Zhao Chao 趙超, ed., *Tangdai muzhi huibian* 唐代墓誌彙編 (2 vols, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), p. 1768.

⁹⁵ *Shu yuan jinghua*, j. 20.

Calligraphy and the *Swamp of Ink*, and, after the eleventh century, they increased so much that it is very difficult to imagine that the readership had not increased likewise. The trend continued in the following centuries, leading to a great expansion of calligraphic compendia, some of the relatively more important ones being the *Comprehensive Explanations on Calligraphy* (*Fashu tong shi* 法書通釋) by Zhang Shen 張紳 (fl. second half of the fourteenth century),⁹⁶ the *Correct Records on the Technique of Calligraphy* (*Shu fa zheng zhuan* 書法正傳) by Feng Wu 馮武 (b. 1627)⁹⁷ (published in the first half of the eighteenth century), and the above-mentioned *Hanxi's Comprehensive Explanations on Calligraphy*.

Thus, it is perhaps not by chance that at some point in time someone wrote a gloss by hand on the front cover of the second volume of the 1580 edition of the *Collection of the Ink Pond* that reads “Collection of the Ink Pond, Brush Technique. The first treatises of this volume should be examined often.” (See figure 2.) The second volume contains the second part of the section on brush technique, which in fact starts with the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*. This of course does not prove that everyone who later possessed or read the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* held the same view, nor does it mean that the gloss is of an early date. Nevertheless, it is my interpretation that the gloss, having conveyed a strong positive comment, suggests a different approach from that of Zhu Changwen, and perhaps it also indicates that readers felt the need to restore learning in such a basic technical training, which was commonplace in ancient times.

CONCLUSION

This article has shown that the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* was the result of a relatively complex process of compiling and transmission. The embryonic stage can be tracked back to as early as the ninth century, whereas its mature development must have occurred in the middle of the eleventh, when the text reached wide diffusion followed by Zhu Changwen's inclusion of it in his *Collection of the Ink Pond*. In spite of such a timeframe, however, authorship cannot be established with satisfying clarity. Probably due to its long formative history, the text accrued different parts from time to time, which, however, all deal with the same subject, that is, the technique of calligraphy. Tradition-

⁹⁶ In *ZGSHQS* 3, pp. 307–22. On this text, see Pietro De Laurentis, “On the *Comprehensive Explanations on Calligraphy*,” in *Ming Qing Yanjiu* 16 (2011), pp. 59–92.

⁹⁷ Feng Wu 馮武, *Shu fa zheng zhuan* 書法正傳 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1985). Also in *ZGSHQS* 9, pp. 804–70.

ally, explanations of calligraphic method had not been the main focus of literati writing on calligraphy, and such technical writing as existed was intended for young students. As its title reveals, the notion of a “forbidden classic” was very likely intended to increase its legitimacy as a calligraphic compendium through self-referential authoritativeness.

Despite this fact, the study of calligraphy found in the *Forbidden Classic*, and which partly resembles that found in more famous works, such as Sun Guoting’s *Manual of Calligraphy*,⁹⁸ still provides several passages which help us better understand the processes involved in the practice of calligraphy. Perhaps the central point of the writer was that it was impossible to create a list of “rules” by which to study calligraphy. This point might seem paradoxical if we consider, for example, the following two statements:

First is brushwork, second is to distinguish the configurations [of brushstrokes], third is to compose the structure. All these three characteristics being acquired, then one’s [writing] can be considered calligraphy.⁹⁹

The general techniques of the brush and the eight methods of the (dot and long) strokes, they are all set in the character *yong*.¹⁰⁰

Despite the somewhat simplistic and pedantic discussions on “varied configurations” and the “composition of structure,” we notice a basic attitude in the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* which generally warns against the creation of a list of strokes and methods. As an introduction to the technique of calligraphy, in fact, just before the previous quotation we read:

As for the structuring forms of calligraphy, they cannot be treated without exceptions. Regarding the configurations of brushwork, they cannot be comprised of one general discourse.¹⁰¹

After the “Methods for Composing the Structure” the text presents a poem regarding the “essential principles” (*jing zhi* 精旨) of characters, which urges one to “Deeply study each character, [and then] skillfulness will be reached through one’s self-realization.”¹⁰² Finally, as a conclusion of the whole text, we read that “... one should watch

⁹⁸ De Laurentis, “Sun Guoting zhi zhiqi,” p. 112.

⁹⁹ *Mochi bian*, j. 2, p. 151.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, j. 2, p. 139.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, j. 2, p. 138.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, j. 2, p. 151.

the connections amongst the columns as a whole. What is marvelous is to ride [the brush] as it rises and falls.”¹⁰³

These statements show that even in a highly prescriptive text such as the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* the author, or any of the successive editors of the text, was aware of the impossibility of including the techniques and methods of calligraphy through a template or a limited set of precepts. This is indeed a common feature of many texts on calligraphic technique, such as the *Seventy-two Examples [of Brushstrokes]* (*Qishi'er lifa* 七十二例法) inscribed in stone by Jiang Ligang 姜立綱 (fl. second half of the fifteenth century) that collects the various configurations of the “eight methods of the character *yong*.” Its closing words are as follows:

Although the seventy-two configurations of the strokes [listed] above possess regularity, their composition depends on the writer. As for the models for learning, the mind should not be limited by regularity.¹⁰⁴

Acknowledging such unfeasibility is actually found in the very earliest texts on calligraphy. As we read in the above-mentioned *Description [shi] of the Cursive Script* by Cui Yuan (77–142) and also in the *Description [ti] of the Li Script (Lishu ti 隸書體)* by Chenggong Sui 成公綏 (231–273), respectively:

As for the main details and the important subtleties, [it is necessary] to follow what is opportune according to [different] times. [I have] hereby roughly exposed a general criterion in this way.¹⁰⁵

Forms and skills are difficult to be exhaustively [expressed]. I have exposed their general aspect.¹⁰⁶

The impossibility of transmitting thoughts, or intentions, through words is indeed a core concept in Taoist philosophy,¹⁰⁷ and it has exerted a great influence on the development of Chinese art.¹⁰⁸ This is one reason why descriptions of the creative process of calligraphy rarely were the main focus of theoretical discussions, at least in texts prior

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ In Chen Menglei 陳夢雷 (b. 1651) et al., ed., *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (10,040 *juan*, 1726; Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1934), *j.* 649, p. 60.

¹⁰⁵ *Jin shu*, *j.* 36, p. 1091.

¹⁰⁶ In Xu Jian 徐堅 (659–729), *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (30 *juan*, mid-8th c.; Beijing: Zhonghua, 2004), *j.* 21, p. 508.

¹⁰⁷ See *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (4th c. BCE), “The Way of Heaven” (Tian dao 天道): “Words have value; what is of value in words is meaning. Meaning has something it is pursuing, but the thing that it is pursuing cannot be put into words and handed down”; trans. Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang-tzu* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1968), p. 152.

¹⁰⁸ Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 12.

to the eleventh century. Hence, if we consider the overall message of such a prescriptive composition as the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*, the discussion of technical issues found therein cannot but be regarded as the exposition of a starting “tool” rather than a fixed “rule”: as the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall* reminds us, no rule exists in calligraphy beside that of individual awakening.

Appendix

A Partial English Translation of the *Forbidden Classic of the Jade Hall*

[Section 1]

As for those devoted to calligraphy, they must follow the teachings of a teacher. It is necessary first of all to recognize the configurations [of brushstrokes], and only then is one able to add refinement to that. When [the writing of] complete characters and [the recognition of] the configurations are clear, one should set the rhythm (lit., make tardiness and roughness be differentiated). Let there be no ties nor restrictions [in moving the brush]. Once ties and restrictions are gone, the essence of pursuing all the varied forms consists in the principle of wielding [the brush] (lit., chopping) with decision, and it depends on varying the shapes. The modifications in varying the shapes shall not be overwhelmed by the abstruse (lit., remote and desolate). Once the abstruse is eliminated, it is necessary to devote oneself to expressivity. At the utmost of expressivity, one almost [reaches] the mysterious subtlety, thus he is free and unrestrained. People may set up their study entirely on rules, and according to their ability or clumsiness, then via the rules [such persons] seek the forms of fat and slim and of dense and neat. If one exceeds [in speed], [this] would then prevent him from being swift, if one is [too] still, this would make him fear to be tardy. Hence [the students'] advancement in study (lit., progress and regress) gives rise to doubts, preventing [them] from determining what is good and what is bad. If moving the brush is puzzling before [one starts] to write, and tremblings are felt down the hand, then aiming to achieve the mysterious subtlety is just something that has not existed yet! The present text discusses dots, strokes, and the components [of characters], along with brushwork and the convergences and divergences [of the shapes of characters]. All [of these explanations] follow the model of Zhong Yuanchang (that is, Zhong You) and Wang Yishao, and must be alternated and varied. Each of these [explanations] has its own origin. I [hereby] provide their general scheme, exposing them in proper arrangement.

[Section 2]

Techniques of Brushwork

As for the structuring forms of calligraphy, they cannot be treated without exceptions. Regarding the configurations of brushwork, they cannot be comprised of one general discourse. Although the mind conforms to the antique [models], the creation [of calligraphies] resides in the actual moment [of writing]. The conditions of slowness and swiftness depend on the opportunity [of the moment]. The general techniques of the brush and the eight methods of the (dot and long) strokes are all set in the character *yong*.

As for the inclined stroke (i.e., dot-stroke), it should not be even.

As for the pulled stroke (i.e., horizontal stroke), it should not be lain.

The drawn stroke (i.e., vertical stroke) should not be straight. [If it is] straight, it lacks strength.

For the hop stroke (i.e., hook-stroke) bend the tip [of the brush], [then] drive it out after gaining the configuration [of the stroke].

For the whip stroke (i.e., right-rising stroke) reverse the brush, raise it up and then whip it.

[When] the sweep stroke (i.e., left-falling stroke) has come down to a sharp point, one leaves leftwards with a pointy end.

For the peck stroke (i.e., short left-falling stroke) the brush should be laid down, but should swiftly cover [the surface].

For the chop stroke (i.e., right-falling stroke) the brush should be waving, [like soldiers] advancing on the battlefield, and [finally] should leave rightwards.

The eight methods arose when clerical-script characters first [were implemented]. Since Cui Ziyu (i.e., Cui Yuan, 77–142) of the Later Han (25–220), and after passing through Zhong [You] and Wang [Xizhi], they have been transmitted and applied [in the intervening epochs]. The eight forms are comprised in [all] the ten thousand characters, and for the Way (*dao*) of the ink, it is something impossible to understand all at once.

...

[Section 5]

As for the overall expertise in the strokes of calligraphy, their shapes and principles are refined and mysterious. [Here] images are listed, and denominations established, through the study of which it will be possible to reach comprehension. [In this way] how cannot the dot-stroke be like a sharp drill inscribing metal, and the long stroke resemble a long awl cutting a stone! By adhering to these [methods] [your] brushwork will improve a thousand miles. First is brushwork, second is to distinguish the configurations [of brushstrokes], third is to compose the structure. All the three characteristics being acquired, then one's [writing] can be considered calligraphy. But if one holds only one way, he will not achieve it. As for the starting and ending [movements] of brushwork, and the divergences and convergences of components, their core relies in squatting and driving, rising and lowering [the tip of the brush]. As for distinguishing the configuration [of the strokes], how can this [just] end with [learning] the "scattered water dots" or the "burning fire dots"! Its core is to adjust to changes and structure modification. As for compos-

ing the structure, how can this [just] terminate with [the setting of] void and filling [in of the structure], and [that of] stretching and driving [the tip of the brush]! Its essence belongs to the reciprocal appearance [of strokes and components]. Understanding these three principles, it will then be possible to start talking about calligraphy. I will hereby make a composition in the shape of an ode, in order to fully convey the essential principles [of how to write calligraphy].

[Section 6]

The poem says:

[When] the right shoulder spreads out, the left foot should be stretched likewise.

As a towering corner branches out, hide in the central part [of the character].

[After something has] already been released, then [the following element] should be held back.

[When] there is no hanging down, there should be no shrinking [either].

Divide like opposing backs and unite like a pair of eyes.

Via the slanted, give exposure to the oblique; via the oblique, stress the curved.

Deeply study each character, [then] skillfulness will be reached through one's self-realization.

As for merits and defects, one should watch the connections amongst the columns as a whole.

What is marvelous is to ride [the brush] as it rises and falls.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ZGSHQS *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書

Figure 1. Collection of the Ink Pond, The Eight Methods of the Yong Character Mochi bian (1580 edn., cited n. 8), j. 2, p. 138. Photograph courtesy of the Tianjin Library.



*Figure 2. Gloss on the Front Cover of Collection of the Ink Pond
(1580 edn.) vol. 2, cover; photograph courtesy of the Tianjin Library.*

