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THE SUNG CALLIGRAPHER TS'AI HSIANG

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Traditionally, the Four Great Masters of Sung dynasty calligraphy were Ts'ai Hsiang 蔡襄 (1012-1067), Su Shih 蘇軾 (1037-1101), Huang T'ing-chien 黃庭堅 (1045-1105), and Mi Fu 米芾 (1052-1107).¹ The last three names are familiar to any amateur of painting or poetry, while Ts'ai Hsiang remains little more than a name in a list, to the Chinese and Western student alike. With the recent publication of Ts'ai Hsiang's works in the National Palace Museum in Peking,² in conjunction with material already published, held by the Shodō hakubutsukan in Tokyo³ and the National Palace Museum in Taipei,⁴ we are now in a position not occupied since the 18th century, that is, to be able to bring together (albeit in reproduction), the virtual entirety of Ts'ai Hsiang's extant oeuvre.

The importance of Ts'ai Hsiang's achievement in calligraphy and its effect on subsequent developments in Sung calligraphy may not be readily apparent to the untutored eye. Yet his moment in history was pivotal, standing as he did between the end of the classic traditions of the Chin and T'ang dynasties and the start of the great expressionism of the Sung. His synthesis of the styles of Wang Hsi-chih 王羲之 (307-365) and Yen Chen-ch'ing 顏真卿

1. An interesting problem, which I am leaving aside in this paper, is the notion currently held (e.g., Hsü Pang-ta, "Su Shih ho Mi Fu ti hsiung-shu," *Shu-fa ts'ung-k'an*, No. 1 (1981), p. 82) that the original Ts'ai in "Su, Huang, Mi, Ts'ai," was Ts'ai Ching (1046-1126) and not Ts'ai Hsiang, based on the theory propounded by Chang Ch'ou (1577-1643?) in his *Ch'ing-ho shu hua fang* (7/136). Fu Shen disagrees, claiming contemporary sources contradict the theory. See "Huang T'ing-chien's Calligraphy and His Scroll for Chang Ta-t'ung: A Masterpiece Written in Exile," 2 volumes. Unpublished Ph.D. Diss., Princeton University, 1976, 261, n. 3.
2. Nine pieces by Ts'ai Hsiang are reproduced in *Ts'ai Hsiang mo-chi ching-p'in* (Shanghai, 1981), and another in *Shan Kuo-ch'iang*, "Ts'ai Hsiang ti ch'ien ts'un-shih mo-chi," *Shu-fa ts'ung-k'an*, No. 1 (1981), 20-22. A scroll of his poems was published earlier in *Wen Wu*, 1957, No. 1, 6.
3. *Shodō Zenshū* (New series), 26 volumes. Tokyo, 1954-68. Volume 15, plates 8-17.
4. *Ku-kung fa-shu*, 22 volumes in 35 parts, to date. Taipei, 1962-: Volume 8, *Sung Ts'ai Hsiang mo-chi*.

(709-785) was the foundation upon which the other three masters of Sung calligraphy were to build and has remained a fundamental approach to developing an individual style in calligraphy down to the present day. Following a brief biographical note, we shall undertake a rapid examination of the development of Ts'ai Hsiang's own personal style and its influence on regular script (k'ai-shu 楷書) in the Sung and on the personal calligraphic styles of Su Shih, Huang T'ing-chien, and Mi Fu.

A biographical sketch. Ts'ai Hsiang (tsu Chün-mo 君謨), a native of Hsien-yu hsien in Fukien province, received his chih-shih degree in 1030, the same year as his life-long friend, Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072), and he remained in government service to the end of his relatively brief and illness-plagued life.⁵ He was three times called to the capital, in 1043, 1052, and 1060, and three times sent southward in disfavor, in 1044, 1054, and 1065. Although he was later to serve in more important positions as Han-lin Academician, as prefectural administrator of Fu-chou, Ch'üan-chou, and K'ai-feng-fu under Emperor Jen-tsung, and as prefectural administrator of Hang-chou and finance commissioner under Emperor Ying-tsung, his reputation was made early when he was elevated to the post of policy-criticism advisor during the minor reform of 1043-44. Ts'ai Hsiang's most celebrated contributions to the preceding struggle against chief councillor Lü I-chien 呂夷簡 and his followers was a widely-circulated poem entitled "Four Worthies and One Unworthy," in which he made a scathing attack on the character of Kao Jo-no 高若訥, a supporter of Lü I-chien, and praised the courage of four recently demoted members of the southern faction, Fan Chung-yen 范仲淹, Ou-yang Hsiu, Yin Shu 尹洙, and Yü Ching 余靖.⁶ The political reputation Ts'ai Hsiang left to posterity was that of the youthful reformer who melted into a capable and incorruptible administrator, many anecdotes concerning which can be found in his Sung-shih biography, chapter 320. An aesthete and capable poet as well, Ts'ai Hsiang's treatises on tea and lychees are still known, and his poetry appears in the Ch'üan Sung tz'u as well as in his collected works, entitled Tuan-ming chi 端明集, in the Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu.⁷

5. The fullest account of Ts'ai Hsiang's life is his epitaph written by Ou-yang Hsiu (Ou-yang Wen-chung-kung chi, Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an edition, 35/2-6). See also Shiba Yoshinobu's entry in Sung Biographies, ed. Herbert Franke (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976), IV, 1026-1029.
6. The poem is recorded in Tuan-ming chi (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu ed.) 1/5b-10a.
7. The Ch'a-lu and Li-chih-p'u are recorded in Tuan-ming chi, 35, his poetry in Ch'üan Sung tz'u, 1/196. A section from the Li-chih-p'u is translated in Shiba Yoshinobu, Commerce and Society in Sung China, trans. Mark Elvin (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, 1970), 88.

Ts'ai Hsiang's synthesis of the styles of Wang Hsi-chih and Yen Chen-ch'ing. It is generally believed that Ts'ai Hsiang began his study of calligraphy with a minor official named Chou Yüeh 周越 (active 1023-1048).⁸ As there are no longer any works by Chou Yüeh extant, we must rely on his contemporaries for a description of his style. The authors of the Hsüan-ho shu-p'u 宣和書譜 were not enthusiastic about his calligraphy, putting his regular and running scripts in the 'marvelous' category, while his cursive script they called merely 'capable'.⁹ Huang T'ing-chien referred to Chou Yüeh's calligraphy as having a "pretty disposition" or "charming appearance" (tsu-mei 姿媚),¹⁰ the term that Han Yü employed to criticize the calligraphy of Wang Hsi-chih. It has been concluded from that that Chou Yüeh practiced academic-style calligraphy, that is, the style of Wang Hsi-chih as it was promoted by the Han-lin Academy calligraphers, who worked from the ink rubbings of Wang Hsi-chih's writing in the Ch'un-hua ko-t'ieh 淳化閣帖, the compendium of early calligraphy commissioned by Sung T'ai-tsung and carved into steles in 992.¹¹ Thus Ts'ai Hsiang probably began the study of calligraphy with the early Sung interpretation of Wang Hsi-chih's manner. Later in life he had contact with something closer to the original, as he recorded his impressions of the copies of the Lan-t'ing preface that were available in his day. (See Pl. 1 for a sample of Wang Hsi-chih's calligraphy.) He wrote,

Of tracing copies of the Lan-t'ing, the copy in the "Secret Pavilion" and the copy of Su (Ts'ai-) weng's (Su Shun-yüan 蘇舜元, 1006-1054) family generally have the method and the spirit. The rest are not worth seeing. Among stone rubbings, only this writing was done with such fine light ink. The rather plump characters are especially beautiful, strong, and admirable.¹²

The "Secret Pavilion" was the traditional designation for a hall housing the imperial calligraphy collection, to which it appears he had access, due no doubt to Jen-tsung's admiration of Ts'ai Hsiang's calligraphy. He also seems to have been familiar with the collection of the Su family, which was main-

8. Ma Tsung-ho, Shu-lin tsao-chien (I-shu ts'ung-pien ed.), 207a; Chiang Hsing-yü, Yen Lu-kung chih shu-hsüeh (I-shu ts'ung-pien ed.), 77.
9. I-shu ts'ung-pien edition, 19/448. These are the third and fourth ranks respectively, following 'untrammeled' and 'inspired.'
10. Ma Tsung-ho, Shu-lin tsao-chien, 197a.
11. Shodō Zenshū, 15/p. 8.
12. Tuan-ming chi, 34/17a-17b. Reproduction of this plate is courtesy of Shodō geijutsu.

義之頓首表亂之極
 先墓再離荼毒追
 惟酷甚痛慕播
 痛費心肝病皆
 矣雖即將復來

Plate I. Wang Hsi-chih, detail of beginning section of Sang-luan t'ieh

儀使上柱國魯郡開
 國公顏真卿立德
 踐行當四科之首
 文碩學為百氏之宗
 忠謹聲于臣節貞

Plate II. Yen Chen-ch'ing, from his colophon to the Tzu-shu kao-shen

tained from the time of the patriarch, the calligrapher and high official Su I-chien 蘇易簡 (957-995), down to the end of the Northern Sung, when Mi Fu traded artworks with his great-grandson, Su Chi 蘇澈, and which was one of the largest and most important art collections outside the palace.¹³ The wording of Ts'ai Hsiang's remarks indicates that this is the text of a colophon to a rubbing, meaning that he either owned it himself or was asked by a friend to appraise and inscribe it; in either case, he had the opportunity to study it closely. He was in the ideal position with regard to both the imperial house and prominent scholar-official collectors to become familiar with the best works after Wang Hsi-chih that were available in the Northern Sung.

From Ts'ai Hsiang's colophon to the Tzu-shu kao-shen 自書譜身,¹⁴ we know he had direct contact with at least one authentic ink original by Yen Chen-ch'ing, and through his friendship with Ou-yang Hsiu and their mutual interest in calligraphy, he would have seen the works by Yen Chen-ch'ing that made up the majority of the Ou-yang family collection.¹⁵ The serious study of Yen Chen-ch'ing's calligraphy must have been undertaken very early in his career, for his Hsieh tz'u yü shu shih piao 謝賜御書詩表, which clearly bespeaks years of practice in the style, was written in 1052, when he was only forty years old.¹⁶ His interest in Yen's style continued through the decade, as indicated by his colophon to the Tzu-shu kao-shen of 1055, and the inscription for the Wan-an bridge, done in 1059.¹⁷ The intensive training in Yen Chen-ch'ing's style in his early maturity as a calligrapher provided the basis for his personal style in later years. (See Pl. 2 for a sample of Yen's calligraphy.)

The synthesis of the styles of Wang Hsi-chih and Yen Chen-ch'ing occurs in Ts'ai Hsiang's writing of the 1060's. His later works, such as the letters in regular-running script from 1063-64, show him no longer simply reproducing a faithful version of Yen Chen-ch'ing's style, but using it as a solid structural base from which to explore the dynamic, virtuoso exercise of the

13. Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), 47.

14. Reproduced in *Shodō Zenshū*, 10/60-65.

15. Fu Shen, "Huang T'ing-chien," 208.

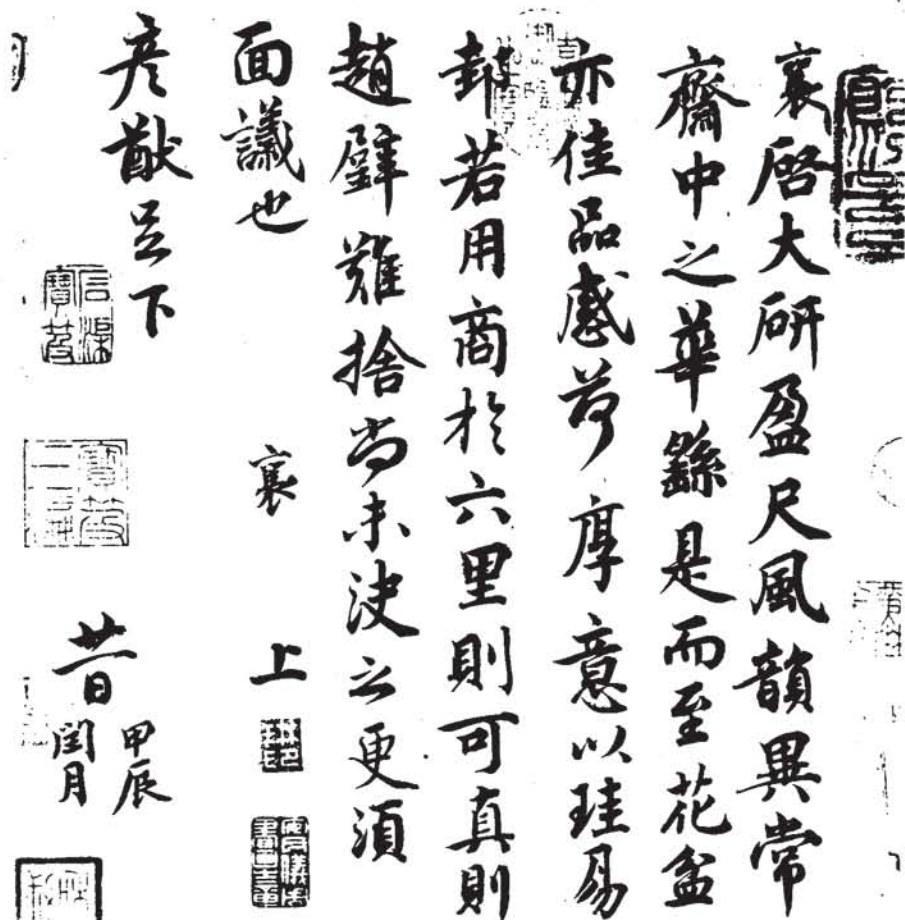
16. There are two versions extant, one reproduced in *Shodō Zenshū*, volume 15, the other in *Ku-kung fa-shu*, volume 8. The latter is probably the copy.

17. Reproduced in *Shodō Zenshū*, 15/13-17. The Yen Chen-ch'ing piece reproduced on the following page of the present article is courtesy of the Collection of the Shodō hakubutsukan, Tokyo.

brushstip inherent in the style of Wang Hsi-chih.¹⁸ One of these is reproduced here (Pl. 3), the Ta-yen t'ieh, an informal letter to the calligrapher-official T'ang Hsün 唐詢 (1005-1064), dated 1064, now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. In the Ta-yen t'ieh, for example, each character manifests the superimposition of the languid shaping of strokes derived from Wang Hsi-chih over the crisply geometric composition of character forms taken from Yen Chen-ch'ing. In the character i 意 (3/7), for instance, the basic structure is precise and symmetrical, ordered by parallel horizontal strokes and upright verticals, and firm-shouldered in the manner of Yen Chen-ch'ing. Enlivening this basic form are the casual ligatures between horizontal strokes and stroke-tips that are subtly and deliberately shaped, not in the knife-sharp ends of Yen Chen-ch'ing's regular script, but in the variety of quickening organic forms characteristic of the brushwork of Wang Hsi-chih. The character ch'ang 常 (1/10) also shows Yen Chen-ch'ing's style of composition: a long, drawn-down structure made up of strokes at right angles to one another, with each change of direction articulated strongly. Though it lacks the dynamic asymmetry and skewed axis of Wang Hsi-chih's style of composition, his sensitively formed strokes and ligatures are in evidence.

In pursuit of a style that would correspond with his class and its ideals, yet express his individuality as an aesthete and man of letters, Ts'ai Hsiang draped the firm moral frame of the T'ang loyalist in the elegant and sensuous raiment of the Eastern Chin aristocrat. Ts'ai Hsiang combined the two traditions because they were the most prestigious of the classic traditions and because they could intermingle stylistically to the benefit of both, multiplying the rich and varied brush-methods of each. Yet the artistic personality Ts'ai Hsiang revealed in his synthesis was ultimately quite unlike those of either Wang Hsi-chih or Yen Chen-ch'ing. Wang Hsi-chih was celebrated for the spontaneous diversity of his character forms, while Yen Chen-ch'ing's writing was deliberately uncanonical in its forms and diverse in the size and shape of brushstrokes. Ts'ai Hsiang did not amplify these qualities, but adopted the most characteristic version of each style and practiced them rather methodically. In the spirit of the early Neo-Confucian scholars who endeavored to purify and regularize the Confucian canon, Ts'ai Hsiang was engaged in codifying the two styles within his own, and certain qualities of rigidity and sameness seen in his style were the result of that puritanical spirit. The possibilities for expression in the synthesis of these two styles was to be more fully explored by the later calligraphers of the Sung.

18. The Ch'eng-hsin-t'ang t'ieh, 1063, and the Ta-yen t'ieh, 1064, are reproduced in *Ku-kung fa-shu*, volume 8, and the two poems dated 1066 are reproduced in Ts'ai Hsiang mo-chi ching-p'in. Reproduction here is courtesy of the Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Republic of China.

Plate III. Ts'ai Hsiang, from the *Ta-yen t'ieh*

The development of Sung-k'ai. The second area in which Ts'ai Hsiang represents the beginning of dominant trends in Sung calligraphy is that of script type. Whereas his synthesis of Wang Hsi-chih and Yen Chen-ch'ing involved an approach to style, it also initiated Sung-k'ai 宋楷 (Sung regular script), sometimes called hsing-k'ai 行楷 (regular-running script), a particular type of regular script that could be employed in many different styles of writing.

Regular script in the T'ang dynasty, although it underwent metamorphoses of style, was uniform in structure and conception. The conception was of a standard or perfect script, one that would reflect the dignity of the subject of state or family monuments. The structure that fits this conception is balanced, symmetrical, clearly articulated in all its elements, firmly connected and solidly upright. In the regular script of the early T'ang period, exemplified by the styles of Yü Shih-nan 虞世南 (558-638) and Ou-yang Hsün 歐陽詢 (557-641), the overall shape of the characters is tall and slender, balanced and symmetrical, the individual strokes thin and sharp, but with great tensile strength. The calligraphy of Yen Chen-ch'ing represents the dominant style of regular script in the mid-T'ang period. His characters are displayed more broadly, made up of heavier strokes with flared endings. As the characters expand outward and show great variation in the width of strokes, there is great energy and power to his style. In the late T'ang period, the style of calligraphers such as Liu Kung-ch'üan 柳公權 (778-865) demonstrated a return to narrow characters composed of slender, bony strokes, yet retained the strong articulation of stroke-endings that marked the regular script of Yen Chen-ch'ing.¹⁹ Different as the styles of these calligraphers were, they maintained the strict standards of T'ang regular script. Each stroke was precisely formed and constituted a separate unit, with no fine trail of the brush to create a casual flow between them. No linked or simplified elements from running script were introduced. Regular script maintained its purity even into the mid-Northern Sung period, in the calligraphy of the scholar-officials who followed the style of Yen Chen-ch'ing, in works such as Ts'ai Hsiang's *Tzu-shu kao-shen* colophon of 1055 and Ou-yang Hsiu's postface to the *Chi-ku lu* 集古錄, written in 1064.²⁰

19. See, for Yü Shih-nan, *Shodō Zenshū*, 7/69-76, for Ou-yang Hsün, 7/45, for Yen Chen-ch'ing, 10/12-17, and for Liu Kung-ch'üan, 10/84-89.

20. Reproduced in *Shodō Zenshū*, 15/5-7.

By the beginning of the 12th century, the face of regular script had changed radically. No longer the austere construction of the T'ang, it had absorbed a considerable amount of the linking of strokes and simplification of elements seen in running script. The new script, termed Sung-k'ai, was practiced by all, conservative and liberal, emperor and minister. Combining the firm structure of regular script and the fluidity of running script, this script type was even employed on public proclamations carved into stone, where only strict regular script would have been used before.²¹ Huang T'ing-chien's famous masterwork in regular script, the Sung-feng ko 松風閣, done in 1102, shows a new dynamic asymmetry, strokes linked by fine ligatures, and simplified elements taken from running script merged with the structure and pattern of regular script.²² The same characteristics were revealed in Mi Fu's regular script. Though he rarely practiced it, when called upon to produce it in his official capacity, his regular script was quite informal, showing many linked and simplified elements.²³ The emperor Hui-tsung developed a unique type of Sung-k'ai known as "slender gold script" (shou-chin t'i 瘦金體), an informal regular script composed of attenuated, wire-fine strokes with exaggeratedly elaborate tips, justly famous for its elegant appearance.²⁴ This preference for informality continued through the Southern Sung, finding its final expression in the last important calligrapher of the Sung period, Chang Chi-chih 張即之 (1186-1266).²⁵

The catalyst for the change of taste that took place in the second half of the 11th century was the regular-running script of Ts'ai Hsiang. His works in the style of Yen Chen-ch'ing testify to the importance of the T'ang master in the Sung period, but it was his personal letters in regular-running script, following his synthesis of Wang Hsi-chih and Yen Chen-ch'ing, that the later calligraphers of Sung considered his beacon performance. Looking at Ts'ai Hsiang's Ta-yen t'ieh of 1064, we can see the informalizing influence that was to permeate regular script from then on. The clear, open regular script structure and the obvious emphasis on stroke-ends and changes of direction

21. Such as Ts'ai Ching's Ta-kuan sheng-tso-pei t'i-o of 1108, reproduced in Shodō Zenshū, 15/117.

22. Reproduced in Shodō Zenshū, 15/78-85.

23. Ibid., 15/107-8.

24. Ibid., 15/fig. 50.

25. See Fu Shen, Traces of the Brush Studies in Chinese Calligraphy (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), 166-7.

remain, but ligatures connecting certain strokes have begun to appear. In some characters, elements are simplified (as in kan 感 3/4, chao 趙 5/1, and nan 難 5/3), while a few characters are done in pure running script form (such as k'o 荷 3/5 and shang 尚 5/5). Further, Ts'ai Hsiang is ostentatious in his use of an exposed tip, which is associated primarily with running and cursive scripts and was rarely used in the regular script of the T'ang masters, so its use in Sung regular script constitutes an "improvement" in naturalism, spontaneity, and expressiveness over the T'ang style. All these elements of Ts'ai Hsiang's regular-running script conditioned and contributed to the mood of intimacy and informality in calligraphy that reigned during the Sung as they were adopted and further developed by the calligraphers who followed.

In sum, Ts'ai Hsiang represents the pivotal point in the early development of Sung calligraphy on two counts: he initiated the artistic reinterpretation of the styles of Wang Hsi-chih and Yen Chen-ch'ing in a dynamic new synthesis, and this synthesis resulted in a new hybrid script type. Together they afforded a personal style for Ts'ai Hsiang and a superb vehicle of expression for later Sung calligraphers.

Ts'ai Hsiang's influence on the other three masters of Sung. To some extent, Ts'ai Hsiang's achievements in calligraphy made possible those of Su Shih, Huang T'ing-chien, and Mi Fu. His influence extended itself in a general visual correspondence, a continuation of the overall "look" of his regular-running script: the firm, fulsome, informal, expressive qualities that are characteristic of Sung dynasty calligraphy in general and that derive from the fact of his synthesis of Wang Hsi-chih and Yen Chen-ch'ing, a combination that would be repeated, with different proportions of the two, by the later masters.²⁶

Su Shih. Su Shih admired Ts'ai Hsiang's calligraphy unequivocally. He wrote,

Chün-mo's natural ability at calligraphy is lofty, steeped in learning and profoundly accomplished. His heart and hand respond as one. His transformations are without limit, consequently, he is the best of this dynasty.²⁷

By "natural ability" (t'ien-tzu 天資), Su Shih meant a style of calligraphy that is unself-conscious and spontaneous. Ts'ai Hsiang had earlier used the

26. Although they drew from both, Su Shih and Huang T'ing-chien relied more on Yen Chen-ch'ing, while Mi Fu favored Wang Hsi-chih.

27. Ma Tsung-ho, Shu-lin tsao-chien, 206a.

same phrase to describe Yen Chen-ch'ing.²⁸ This idea is reinforced by the following phrase, "transformations without limit," meaning not only that Ts'ai was competent in many different script types, but that the mastery of those scripts was so complete that great variety in speed, weight, and ink tonality would emerge spontaneously from his brush, allowing for the expression of individual personality in the calligraphy.

Su Shih's conception of the amateur aesthetic held that the primary goal in a scholar's practice of the arts was to release his emotions and to communicate his personality and ethical stand.²⁹ A celebrated anecdote concerning Ts'ai Hsiang's wish to see himself as a calligrapher set apart from the court professionals (*tai-chao* 待詔) would have convinced Su Shih that he and Ts'ai Hsiang shared the same stance:

Jen-tsu (Emperor Sung Jen-tsung) greatly loved (Ts'ai's) calligraphy. Once, the emperor ordered the memorial tablet inscription for his mother's brother, Li Yung-ho, the prince of Lung-hsi, commanding that Hsiang should write it, and when the court scholars were to compose the inscription for the Wen-ch'eng Empress, Hsiang was again ordered to compose it, but he refused, saying, 'This is a task for the *tai-chao*. The Confucian scholars' practice of calligraphy is for their leisure only.' Jen-tsu did not force him.³⁰

As Su Shih was in the capital in 1060-61 for the examinations, at the same time that Ts'ai Hsiang was made a Han-lin Academician, he probably heard the story then, perhaps from Ou-yang Hsiu, who had it in a letter from Ts'ai himself.³¹ Whether or not Su Shih met Ts'ai Hsiang in the capital, one important way in which the younger man could appreciate the personality and values of one of the admired protagonists of the minor reform was through his calligraphy.

To what degree Su Shih's promotion of Ts'ai Hsiang's calligraphy resulted in its reknown would be difficult to establish precisely, but as he set the standards for literati tastes in painting and poetry for his day, his judgments in the field of calligraphy must have carried similar weight. He also wrote,

As for Chün-mo's regular, running, cursive, and clerical scripts, they never fail to attain his ideal. His remaining energy and leftover ideas he transforms into flying white. This can be appreciated but cannot be learned. If people do not grasp this idea, how can they equal him?³²

Once again, Su Shih has described the qualities of the great calligrapher: one who can work within a multiplicity of scripts, but who is transported beyond the mere reproduction of established forms in a rush of energy sufficient to change liquid ink into the vapor of flying white. Although Su Shih declared that Ts'ai's transformations could be appreciated but not learned, Huang T'ing-chien once wrote, "Tzu-chan (Su Shih) formerly modelled his writing after (Ts'ai Hsiang); this is a secret that nobody knows."³³ In Su Shih's earliest works, such as the *Han-shih t'ieh* 寒食帖 of around 1082, there is a strong resemblance between his style and Ts'ai's. The writing has the mild, generous qualities of Ts'ai Hsiang's regular-running script, which Su Shih emulated in his early style before he began to emphasize his own idiosyncracies. A glance at any later work by Su Shih will reveal his further pursuit of the expressive distortion of character size and shape, but in his early style Ts'ai Hsiang serves as a stylistic source in his own right, and later, as a general model for the study and synthesis of the Chin and T'ang masters.

Huang T'ing-chien. The transformation in calligraphy styles in the mid-Northern Sung was away from the formal, impassive qualities exemplified in regular script and toward the increased expressive capacity inherent in the running and cursive scripts. Huang T'ing-chien epitomized the culmination of this trend, and naturally he was more sympathetic to Ts'ai Hsiang's informal style than his regular script in the style of Yen Chen-ch'ing.³⁴ He recognized that the most progressive aspect of Ts'ai Hsiang's calligraphy was his regular-running script, which he employed in his personal letters. Huang T'ing-chien once wrote of Ts'ai Hsiang, "Chün-mo's letters in regular-running script are extremely beautiful, enabling him to enter the hall of Yung-hsing (Yü Shih-nan)."³⁵ Yü Shih-nan was a mid-T'ang follower of the

28. *Tuan-ming chi*, 34/166.

29. See Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), 29-43.

30. *Hsüan-ho shu-p'u* (I-shu ts'ung-pien ed.), 6/151.

31. Recorded in *Tuan-ming chi*, 27/21b-22b.

32. Ma Tsung-ho, *Shu-lin tsao-chien*, 206a. Flying White (*fei-pai* 飛白) indicates streaks of bare paper showing through the ink due to the speed or dryness of the brush.

33. *Shan-ku t'i-pa* (I-shu ts'ung-pien ed.), 5/53.

34. For a complete discussion of Huang T'ing-chien as a calligrapher, see Fu Shen, "Huang T'ing-chien's Calligraphy."

35. Ma Tsung-ho, *Shu-lin tsao-chien*, 206b.

style of Wang Hsi-chih, but his calligraphy has a vigorous quality that is customarily absent from Wang Hsi-chih's style. Huang T'ing-chien's astute statement indicates his perception that Ts'ai Hsiang's informal style, like that of Yü Shih-nan, is one in which monumentality and elegance are combined.

Although Huang T'ing-chien admired Ts'ai Hsiang, calling him "a great hero in calligraphy,"³⁶ he did not consider him as one of his stylistic sources, as he did with Su Shih, Yang Ning-shih 楊凝式 (873-954), and Yen Chen-ch'ing.³⁷ He once said of his own calligraphy, "this writing looks like the letter style of Ts'ai Chün-mo, but what I really regret is that it cannot compare with Yen (Chen-ch'ing) and Yang (Ning-shih)."³⁸ What Huang T'ing-chien meant by this statement was that he and Ts'ai Hsiang both modelled themselves on the same masters and that by the same process of assimilating earlier styles, Huang T'ing-chien had created in this one piece of writing something similar to Ts'ai Hsiang's interpretation of Yen Chen-ch'ing. Therefore, Ts'ai Hsiang's influence on Huang T'ing-chien was as an earlier contemporary who had drawn on some of the same sources, not as a direct stylistic model.

Mi Fu. Mi Fu did not often comment on the calligraphy of his contemporaries, being absorbed as he was in collecting, studying, and discussing the works of the Chin masters.³⁹ Since Mi Fu prided himself on modelling his style after the oldest extant ink originals, he would never have admitted to any influence from Ts'ai Hsiang, a too-near contemporary. Mi Fu began his study of calligraphy with Yen Chen-ch'ing and then worked backward in time through the major T'ang masters to those of the Eastern Chin. He then espoused the tradition of Wang Hsi-chih and Wang Hsien-chih 王獻之 (344-388) exclusively and belittled the achievements of those masters outside that tradition, criticizing the regular script of Yen Chen-ch'ing, which he found mannered and unnatural, and praising instead his running script, which was generally much less celebrated. In one brief remark about Ts'ai Hsiang's calligraphy, he pronounced it "graceful and slender in form, leisurely in its pace, ornate and florid."⁴⁰ Though Mi Fu found fault with Ts'ai Hsiang's

36. Shan-ku t'i-pa, 5/50.

37. Ibid., 5/44.

38. Ibid., 7/66.

39. The definitive study of this subject is Ledderose, Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy.

40. Ma Tsung-ho, Shu-lin tsao-chien, 206a.

style, he had studied it enough to judge it, and even though he might disclaim them, an eclectic artist like Mi Fu could not help but absorb influences from the styles he studied, and they reveal themselves in his calligraphy. Thus the underlying structure of Yen Chen-ch'ing's style emerged in Mi Fu's later works in running script, while some of his early works disclose the same approach to composition and brushwork seen in the later works of Ts'ai Hsiang.

As with Su Shih, it is necessary to look at very early works by Mi Fu in order to see the stylistic affinities with Ts'ai Hsiang. In a work such as the T'iao-ch'i t'ieh 苕溪帖 of 1088, Mi Fu had not fully developed the self-consciously mellifluous brushwork of his later style.⁴¹ The two calligraphers put the same emphasis on the sensitive touch of the brush, in contrast to the effect of weight and power seen in the calligraphy of Su Shih and Huang T'ing-chien. Mi Fu's relationship to Ts'ai Hsiang is similar to that of Huang T'ing-chien, as an artist who based himself on the same styles. The modern scholar P'an Po-ying has argued that, in dividing the Four Masters of the Sung into two schools, Su Shih and Huang T'ing-chien should be classed together as innovators of new styles of calligraphy, while Ts'ai Hsiang and Mi Fu he considers to have a greater dependence on past styles, being less extreme in their individualism and deviation from past models.⁴² It is this general similarity in visual impact and approach to the past that links Mi Fu and Ts'ai Hsiang.

41. Reproduced in Shodō Zenshū, 15/86-87. Compare this to a later work such as the Chang Ch'i-ming t'ieh, Shodō Zenshū, 15/95-96.

42. "Pei Sung shu-p'ai ti hsin chiu kuan," I-lin ts'ung-lu, 2/116-120.