

Unit 8

Reading A

Chines Calligraphy: An Introduction 《中国书法：简介》

1 The history of Chinese calligraphy is as long as that of China itself. Calligraphy is a special category in China's world of fine arts and one of the most challenging Chinese art forms for a foreigner to appreciate or master. Calligraphy, or shufa, is one of the four basic skills and disciplines of the Chinese literati, together with painting (hua), stringed musical instruments (qin) and board games (qi).

中国书法的历史与中国本身的历史一样悠久。书法在中国的美术世界中是一个特殊的类别，也是外国人最难欣赏或掌握的中国艺术形式之一。书法，即“书(shū)法(fǎ)”，与绘画(“画(huà)”)、弦乐器(“琴(qín)”)和棋类游戏(“棋(qí)”)一起，是中国文人的四项基本技能和素养之一。

Classification

2 To study Chinese calligraphy one must learn something about the origins of Chinese characters, which can be traced to inscriptions on bones, tortoise shells and bronze ware, of which the earliest identifiable characters belonged to the Shang Dynasty(16th – 11th century BC).

要学习中国书法，就必须了解一些汉字的起源。汉字的起源可以追溯到甲骨文、龟甲和青铜器上的铭文，其中最早可识别的汉字属于商朝（公元前 16 世纪—公元前 11 世纪）。

3 Through the centuries Chinese characters have changed constantly and are mainly divided into five categories today: the seal script (zhuan shu), official script (li shu), regular script (kai shu), running script(xing shu) and cursive script (cao shu). Chinese calligraphy, like script itself, has developed the above-mentioned styles according to various schools.

几个世纪以来，汉字不断变化，如今主要分为五大类：篆书、隶书、楷书、行书和草书。中国书法和字体本身一样，根据不同的流派发展出了上述风格。

4 Seal characters, which were developed in the Western Zhou Dynasty (11th century – 711 BC) and are the earliest form of writing after oracle bone inscriptions, were the first unified and standardized characters of the nation. Official script is a simplified form of script since seal characters were too complicated for ancient officials to use when copying documents. Official script led to the emergence of regular script, which was square in form, non-cursive and architectural in style, in the third century. Official script also gave birth to cursive script where characters are often joined with the last stroke of the first that merges into the initial stroke of the next character, which made the writing process much faster. Running script falls somewhere between regular and cursive scripts.

篆书是在西周时期（公元前 11 世纪—公元前 711 年）发展起来的，是甲骨文之后最早的书写形式，也是国家最早统一规范的文字。隶书是篆书的简化形式，因为篆书对于古代官员在抄写文件时来说过于复杂。隶书在公元 3 世纪催生了楷书，楷书字形方正、不连笔且具有建筑风格。隶书也产生了草书，在草书中，字符常常相互连接，第一个字的最后一笔融入下一个字的第一笔，这使得书写过程快了很多。行书则介于楷书和草书之间。

5 Calligraphy is an art form that involves a great deal of theory and requires many skills; consequently there are few calligraphers that have reached the highest realm of calligraphy. Among the most outstanding calligraphers in ancient China were Wang Xizhi, Ouyang Xun, Yan Zhenqing, and Liu Gongquan, who are known for pioneering their own styles.

书法是一种涉及大量理论且需要诸多技巧的艺术形式；因此，达到书法最高境界的书法家寥寥无几。在中国古代最杰出的书法家中，有王羲之、欧阳询、颜真卿和柳公权，他们以开创各自的风格而闻名。

Four Treasures of the Study

6 To produce Chinese characters one will need a brush, paper, ink stick and ink stone, commonly referred to as the “Four Treasures of the Study”. To learn calligraphy, it is necessary to learn about these tools.

要写出汉字，就需要毛笔、纸、墨和砚，它们通常被称为“文房四宝”。要学习书法，就有必要了解这些工具。

7 While brushes are varied, white-goat-hair, black-rabbit-hair and yellow-weasel-hair brushes are the main ones. On the basis of function, brushes are classified into three groups: hard, soft and both. Brush handles are usually made of bamboo, wood, lacquer or porcelain; ivory or jade handles are rare and precious.

虽然毛笔种类繁多，但白羊毫、黑兔毫和黄鼬毫毛笔是主要的几种。根据功能，毛笔分为硬毫、软毫和兼毫三类。笔杆通常由竹子、木材、漆或瓷器制成；象牙或玉制笔杆则很罕见且珍贵。

8 The ink stick is a unique pigment used for Chinese traditional painting and calligraphy. The most famous ink stick is hui mo(Anhui ink stick), made of pines that grow on Huangshan Mountain in Anhui Province. Clean water is needed to grind the ink stick, which must be balanced in the hand during the grinding or rubbing process. Press hard and rub lightly, slowly and evenly against the ink slab until a thick, liquid ink forms.

墨是中国传统绘画和书法中使用的一种独特颜料。最著名的墨是徽墨，由生长在安徽省黄山的松树制成。研磨墨块需要清水，在研磨过程中，墨块必须在手中保持平衡。用力按压并轻轻地、缓慢且均匀地在砚台上研磨，直到形成浓稠的液态墨汁。

9 Paper was invented by Cai Lun in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220). While paper comes in many varieties, Xuan paper, produced in the Jing Prefecture of Xuanzhou (today’s Anhui Province), is considered the best for Chinese calligraphy. The paper is soft and fine textured, suitable for conveying the artistic expression of both Chinese calligraphy and painting. With a good tensile strength and mothproof quality, the paper can be preserved for a long time.

纸是东汉时期（25—220）蔡伦发明的。虽然纸有很多种类，但产于宣州（今安徽省境内）的宣纸被认为是最适合中国书法的纸张。这种纸柔软且质地细腻，适合传达中国书法和绘画的艺术表现力。宣纸具有良好的抗拉强度和防虫性能，可以保存很长时间。

10 Ink stones or ink slabs have been classified into three categories: Duan, She and Tao. Features common to all three ink slabs are the stone’s hardness and fineness. Although the stone is hard and fine, it is not dry or slippery. Using a hard, smooth stone, liquid ink can be produced easily by

rubbing the ink stick against the stone.

砚台或墨砚分为端砚、歙砚和洮砚三大类。这三种砚台的共同特点是石质坚硬细腻。虽然石头坚硬细腻，但不干燥也不滑。使用坚硬光滑的石头，通过将墨块在砚台上研磨，可以很容易地产生液态墨汁。

11 By controlling the flexibility of the brush, the concentration of the ink and the absorbency of the paper, the artist can produce an infinite variety of calligraphic styles and forms.

通过控制毛笔的柔韧性、墨的浓度以及纸的吸水性，艺术家可以创造出无穷无尽的书法风格和形式。

Calligraphy: Leader of All Art Forms

12 Few nations in the world have calligraphy as a form of art. In China, calligraphy has maintained a close rapport with the country's cultural development.

世界上很少有国家把书法作为一种艺术形式。在中国，书法与国家的文化发展一直保持着密切的联系。

13 Calligraphy is an expressive art. According to an old Chinese saying, "the way characters are written is a portrait of the person who writes them." Expressing the abstract beauty of lines and rhythms, calligraphy is a reflection of a person's emotions, moral integrity, character, educational level, accomplishments in self-cultivation, intellectual tastes and approach to life. Chinese characters, which convey ideas, are regarded as the most abstract and sublime art form.

书法是一种富有表现力的艺术。中国有句古话：“字如其人。”书法表达了线条和节奏的抽象之美，反映了一个人的情感、品德、性格、教育水平、修身成就、知识品味和生活态度。传达思想的汉字被视为最抽象、最高尚的艺术形式。

14 Calligraphy is also a practical fine art. Exotic calligraphic inscriptions written on paper, wooden plaques or stone tablets serve as decorations of a deep artistic value.

书法也是一种实用的美术。写在纸上、木匾上或石碑上的别具一格的书法题字具有深刻的艺术价值，可作为装饰。

15 Calligraphy manifests the basic characteristics of all Chinese arts. Closely associated with paintings – the two leaders of Chinese art forms – calligraphy takes precedence over painting since it greatly inspired the art of painting. Moreover, calligraphy has influenced other typically Chinese art forms like classical poetry, seal-cutting, sculpture, traditional music and dance, architecture and handicrafts.

书法体现了所有中国艺术的基本特征。书法与绘画——中国艺术形式的两大领军者——密切相关，且书法优先于绘画，因为它极大地启发了绘画艺术。此外，书法还影响了其他典型的中国艺术形式，如古典诗歌、篆刻、雕塑、传统音乐和舞蹈、建筑以及手工艺品。

16 Calligraphy is a mental exercise that coordinates the mind and body. It is a most relaxing yet highly disciplined exercise for physical and spiritual well-being. Historically, many calligraphic artists lived to a ripe, old age.

书法是一种身心协调的精神锻炼。它是一种非常放松但又高度自律的锻炼方式，有益于身心健康。在历史上，许多书法艺术家都长寿。

An Art of the Orient

17 Chinese calligraphy is an Oriental art. Like chopsticks, calligraphy was once entirely Chinese, but as Chinese culture spread to Korea, Japan, and Singapore, calligraphy became a unique feature of the Oriental art.

中国书法是一种东方艺术。就像筷子一样，书法曾经完全是中国独有的，但随着中国文化传播到韩国、日本和新加坡，书法成为了东方艺术的一个独特特色。

18 Calligraphy is even wildly accepted by the West; as once Picasso said, “Had I been born Chinese, I would have been a calligrapher, not a painter. ” Many calligraphic elements are being adopted by modern western art.

书法甚至被西方广泛接受；正如毕加索曾经说过：“如果我生在中国，我会是一个书法家，而不是画家。”许多书法元素正在被现代西方艺术所采用。