

Unit 8
Reading B

Chines Calligraphy 《中国书法》

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1 The position of Chinese calligraphy in the history of the world's art is truly unique. Owing to the use in writing of the brush, which is more subtle and more responsive than the pen, calligraphy has been elevated to the true level of an art on a par with Chinese painting. The Chinese are fully aware of this when they regard painting and calligraphy as sister arts, *shu-kua*, "calligraphy and painting," forming almost an individual concept and always being mentioned in the same breath. Should there be a question as to which has a wider appeal, the answer would undoubtedly be in favour of calligraphy. It has thus become an art cultivated with the same passion and devotion, dignified by as worthy a tradition, and held in as high esteem as painting itself. Its standards are just as exacting, and its masters have reached heights as unattainable by the common run of men as the masters in other lines. The great Chinese painters, like Tung Gh'ich'ang and Chao Mengfu, are usually great calligraphists also. Chao Mengfu (1254-1322), one of the best known of Chinese painters, said of his own painting: "Rocks are like the *feipo* style of writing (with hollow lines in the strokes), and the trees are like the *chuan* style of writing (with relatively even and twisted strokes). The method of painting lies yet in the 'eight fundamental strokes' of writing. If there is one who can understand this, he will realize that the secret of calligraphy is really the same."

中国书法在世界艺术史上的地位确实独一无二。由于在书写中使用毛笔，毛笔比钢笔更细腻、更灵敏，书法因此被提升到了与中国画同等的真正艺术水平。中国人在将书画视为姊妹艺术时，充分意识到了这一点，“书画”几乎形成了一个单独的概念，总是被同时提及。如果要问哪一个更具吸引力，答案无疑是书法。因此，它成为了一种以同样的热情和奉献精神培养的艺术，有着同样值得尊敬的传统，也像绘画本身一样受到高度尊重。它的标准同样严格，它的大师们所达到的高度，就像其他领域的大师们一样，是普通人难以企及的。伟大的中国画家，如董其昌和赵孟頫，通常也是伟大的书法家。赵孟頫（1254 - 1322），中国最著名的画家之一，谈到自己的画时说：“石如飞白木如籀，写竹还于八法通。若也有人能会此，须知书画本来同。”意思是石头像飞白体的书写风格（笔画中有空心线条），树木像篆书的书写风格（笔画相对均匀且弯曲）。绘画的方法仍在于书法的“永字八法”。如果有人能理解这一点，他就会意识到书法的奥秘实际上是相同的。

2 It seems to me that calligraphy, as representing the purest principles of rhythm and composition, stands in relation to painting as pure mathematics stands in relation to engineering or astronomy. In appreciating Chinese calligraphy, the meaning is entirely forgotten, and the lines and forms are appreciated in and for themselves. In this cultivation and appreciation of pure witchery of line and beauty of composition, therefore, the Chinese have an absolute freedom and entire devotion to pure form as such, as apart from content. A painting has to convey an object, but a well-written character conveys only its own beauty of line and structure. In this absolutely free field, every variety of rhythm has been experimented upon and every type of structure has been explored. The Chinese brush makes the conveyance of every type of rhythmic movement possible, and the Chinese characters, which are theoretically square but are composed from the oddest elements, present an infinite variety of structural problems which every writer must solve for

himself. Thus, through calligraphy, the Chinese scholar is trained to appreciate, as regards line, qualities like force, suppleness, reserved strength, exquisite tenderness, swiftness, neatness, massiveness, ruggedness, and, restraint or freedom; and as regards form, he is taught to appreciate harmony, proportion, contrast, balance, lengthiness, compactness, and sometimes even beauty in slouchiness or irregularity. Thus the art of calligraphy provides a whole set of terms of aesthetic appreciation which we may consider as the bases of Chinese notions of beauty.

在我看来，书法代表着最纯粹的节奏与构图原则，它与绘画的关系就如同纯数学与工程学或天文学的关系。在欣赏中国书法时，其含义被完全遗忘，线条和形式本身就值得欣赏。因此，在这种对纯粹线条魔力和构图之美的培养与欣赏中，中国人对纯粹形式本身有着绝对的自由和全身心的投入，而不考虑内容。一幅画必须传达一个对象，但一个书写优美的字只传达其自身的线条之美和结构之美。在这个绝对自由的领域里，各种节奏都被尝试过，各种类型的结构都被探索过。中国毛笔使各种节奏运动的传达成为可能，而汉字理论上是方形的，但由最奇特的元素组成，呈现出无穷无尽的结构问题，每个书写者都必须自己解决。这样，通过书法，中国文人在线条方面被培养去欣赏诸如刚劲、柔韧、内敛之力、精致温柔、敏捷、整洁、厚重、粗犷以及克制或自由等品质；在形式方面，他们被教导去欣赏和谐、比例、对比、平衡、修长、紧凑，有时甚至是慵懒或不规则之美。因此，书法艺术提供了一整套美学欣赏术语，我们可以将其视为中国美学观念的基础。

3 As this art has a history of well-nigh two thousand years, and as every writer tried to distinguish himself by a new type of rhythm, or structure, therefore, in calligraphy, if in anything, we are entitled to see the last refinement of the Chinese artistic mind. Certain types, such as the worship of beauty of irregularity or of a forever toppling structure that yet keeps its balance will surprise the Westerners by their finesse, all the more so because such types are not easily seen in other fields of Chinese art.

由于这种艺术有将近两千年的历史，并且每个书写者都试图通过一种新的节奏或结构来使自己与众不同，因此，如果说在任何事物中我们都有资格看到中国艺术心灵的极致精妙，那么在书法中尤其如此。某些类型，比如对不规则之美或一种永远摇摇欲坠却又能保持平衡的结构之美的崇尚，会因其精妙而让西方人感到惊讶，更因为这样的类型在其他中国艺术领域并不容易见到。

4 What is of significance to the West is the fact that, not only has it provided the aesthetic basis for Chinese art, but it represents an animistic principle which may be most fruitful of results when properly understood and applied. As stated, Chinese calligraphy has explored every possible style of rhythm and form, and it has done so by deriving its artistic inspiration from nature, especially from plants and animals - the branches of the plum flower, a dried vine with a few hanging leaves, the springing body of the leopard, the massive paws of the tiger, the swift legs of the deer, the sinewy strength of the horse, the bushiness of the bear, the slimness of the stork, or the ruggedness of the pine branch. There is thus not one type of rhythm in nature which has not been copied in Chinese writing and formed directly or indirectly the inspiration for a particular "style." If a Chinese scholar sees a certain beauty in a dry vine with its careless grace and elastic strength, the tip of the end curling upward and a few leaves still hanging on it haphazardly and yet most appropriately, he tries to incorporate that into his writing. If another scholar sees a pine tree that twists its trunk and bends its branches downward instead of upward, which shows a wonderful tenacity and force, he also tries to incorporate that into his style of writing. We have therefore the

“dry-vine” style and the “pine-branch” style of writing.

对西方具有重要意义的是，书法不仅为中国艺术提供了美学基础，而且代表了一种万物有灵的原则，如果得到恰当的理解和应用，可能会产生极为丰硕的成果。如前所述，中国书法探索了每一种可能的节奏和形式风格，并且它是通过从自然中汲取艺术灵感来做到这一点的，尤其是从植物和动物——梅花的树枝、带有几片悬挂着的叶子的干枯藤蔓、豹子跃起的身姿、老虎巨大的爪子、鹿敏捷的腿、马的刚健之力、熊的毛茸茸、鹤的纤细，或者松枝的粗犷。因此，自然界中没有一种节奏类型没有在中国书法中被模仿过，并直接或间接地成为一种特定“风格”的灵感来源。如果一位中国文人在一根干枯的藤蔓中看到某种美，它有着不经意的优雅和弹性的力量，末梢向上卷曲，几片叶子仍然随意却又恰到好处地挂在上面，他就会试图将其融入自己的书写中。如果另一位文人看到一棵松树，它的树干扭曲，树枝向下弯曲而不是向上，显示出奇妙的坚韧和力量，他也会试图将其融入自己的书写风格中。因此，我们有了“枯藤”风格和“松枝”风格的书法。

5 A famous monk and calligraphist had practised writing for years without result, and one day walking on a mountain path he chanced upon two fighting snakes, each straining its neck, which showed strength in apparent gentleness. From this inspiration he developed a most individualistic type of writing, called the “fighting-snakes” style, suggesting the tension and wriggling movement of the snakes' necks. Thus Wang Hsichih (321-379), China's “prince of calligraphists,” spoke about the art of calligraphy in terms of imagery from nature:

Every horizontal stroke is like a mass of clouds in battle formation, every hook like a bent bow of the greatest strength, every dot like a falling rock from a high peak, every turning of the stroke like a brass hook, every drawn-out line like a dry vine of great old age, and every swift and free stroke like a runner on his start.

一位著名的僧人和书法家多年练习书法却毫无成果。有一天，他在山路上行走时，偶然看到两条正在争斗的蛇，每条蛇都伸长脖子，在看似温柔中显示出力量。从这个灵感中，他发展出一种极具个性的书法风格，被称为“斗蛇体”，暗示着蛇脖子的紧张和扭动。因此，中国的“书圣”王羲之（321—379）用来自自然的意象来谈论书法艺术：

“每作一横画，如列阵之排云；每作一戈，如百钧之弩发；每作一点，如高峰坠石；每作一折，如屈折钢钩；每作一牵，如万岁枯藤；每作一放纵，如足行之趋骤。”