

# The Meaning of Life Reflected in the Zen Calligraphy of Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing

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## Abstract

In the late-Ming era, Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing followed the Tang and Song-era aesthetic principle that temperament and art go hand in hand, combining the temperament theories from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism to develop a fascinating calligraphy theory and dynamic calligraphy style. Research for this article revealed that Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's calligraphy followed the style of the Jin and Tang period. His work channeled the essence of famed calligraphers Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi, projecting a sense of balance and harmony. His writings, including *The Book of Profound Calligraphy*, which is an interesting commentary on the art of calligraphy, and *Six Poems*, which emphasized transcending delusions with the mind, tap into the nature and value of life. He excelled at affirming life and encouraging emotions and care. His calligraphy works also promote a better understanding of how Zen principles and the art of calligraphy intertwine. Through the perspective of the Zen mind noumenon, this article will analyze the relationship between Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's calligraphy and Zen ideas while exploring the meaning of life by contrasting it to Zen calligraphy.

**Keywords:** Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing, calligraphy of the eminent monk, Zen, Noumenon Concept of Mind

## I. Introduction

Ever since Buddhism was introduced to China, Confucianism and Buddhism have grown and thrived by borrowing ideas from one another. Although most Confucian scholars criticized the reclusive attitude of Buddhism, Buddhism's sophisticated lines of reasoning became an important source of innovative ideas for intellectuals accustomed to practical reasoning. Wang Yangming<sup>1</sup> (1472–1529) expounded on Lu Jiuyuan's (1139–1192) theory that “mind is principle”, bringing the concept of ‘principle’ isolated in the Cheng–Zhu school of philosophy back to people's ‘innate minds’ and focusing on the free expression of individual spirits, writing, “There are those who learn about benevolence and righteousness, pursue life, and recite poetry and writings without practicing what they preach. Though immersed in Yang Zhu, Mozi, Laozi, and Buddhist philosophy, they only appear to be wise. They may yet pursue a state of self-contentment. Achieve self-contentment, and we may discuss the way of saints.”<sup>2</sup> As a result, the School of Mind saw open and diverse development in the late-Ming dynasty, prompting a revival of Buddhism in the era.

The Zen theory of temperament deeply influenced the landscape of art and literature during the late-Ming dynasty. Li Zhi's<sup>3</sup> (1527–1602) “Childlike Theory” and the Three Yuan Brothers' “Soul-and-Spirit Theory” both emphasized the expression of temperament and spirit. Li Zhi believed that “those with a childlike mind are genuine” and that “it is the original mind at the very beginning of the first thought”<sup>4</sup>. This theory was clearly influenced by the Buddhist concept of ‘thusness’ and became the standard for the creation and critique of literature and art. Famed late-Ming dynasty painter and calligrapher Dong Qichang<sup>5</sup> (1555–1636) borrowed ideas from the Northern and Southern schools of Zen Buddhism and developed the theory that Chinese painting, like Zen Buddhism, can be divided into “north and south schools”. He also promoted concepts such as subtlety, familiarity, and enlightenment<sup>6</sup>.

Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing<sup>7</sup> (1546–1623), courtesy name Chengyin, moniker Han-Shan, secular surname Cai, was from Quanjiao, Jinling (present-day Quanjiao, Anhui). He was one of the Four Eminent Monks of the late-Ming dynasty. Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing believed that the essence of Buddhism lies in the Buddha's teachings on the “mind” and that, throughout his forty-odd years of teaching, the Buddha was always interpreting the concept that “the three realms are only in the mind; the myriad dharmas are only in the consciousness”<sup>8</sup>, so his practice was also the practice of the “mind”. Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing was also influenced by the words of Yuan dynasty monk Zhongfeng Mingben (1263–1323): “Zen and the mind are different names for the same thing”<sup>9</sup>. He had a deep understanding of the concept that “Zen is mind”, pointing out that “Zen is another name for the mind”<sup>10</sup> and “it turns out that Zen is one's own mind”<sup>11</sup>. This concept provided the foundation for his theory of mind noumenon: “This wisdom is not sought externally; it is intrinsic within our own minds”<sup>12</sup>, “The original state of the mind is serene and luminous, vast and empty, without a shred of delusion, clear and bright, not a single thought arising, free of delusion. Everything in the world is reflected within.”<sup>13</sup> He believed that the mind is the source of Zen aesthetic and marvels that the noumenon of mind is serene and luminous, clear and bright, vast and empty, the source of all beauty in the world.

Renowned Ming dynasty calligraphy critic Xiang Mu (dates of birth and death unknown, roughly the same period as Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing) stressed in his book *Earnest Advice on Calligraphy* that “calligraphy is the mind<sup>14</sup>” and “calligraphy reflects the mind<sup>15</sup>”. In Xiang Mu's view, the art of calligraphy is an expression of the mind, “affections of the mind manifests in morality, leadership skills, merit, conduct, writings, and handwriting.<sup>16</sup>” In other words, calligraphy, morality, leadership skills, merit, conduct, and writing are all concrete manifestations of the mind. “The mind of calligraphy advocates planning channeling thought into the brush, an intention before form. The intention of calligraphy, the strength of each stroke and movement of the brush, gives form to the mind<sup>17</sup>.” Here, Xiang describes the mind as intention without form, and intention as the form of the mind. In other words, intention and the mind go hand in hand, which aligns with Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's mind noumenon view of art and culture.

## II. Learning to Appreciate the Imagery of Emptiness

Simplicity and straightforwardness is one of the principles and aesthetic standards of literature and art. It has profound aesthetic value, presenting a natural and deceptively simple beauty of life and wisdom that transcends the self, a beauty of freedom that stems from an enriched life, bringing spiritual comfort to a materialistic world and creating a realm with a different meaning of life. Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's calligraphy was mostly composed in semi-cursive or cursive script, the nature of which emphasizes the free and unrestrained expression of one's understanding of the world. This kind of carefree writing is a natural expression of simplicity and honesty that coincides with the Zen Buddhist idea that “everything lies in the innate mind”. The brushstrokes appear unintentional and subject to whimsy, but everything falls into place in the end.

*Six Character Verse* (fig.1) was in the possession of Liang Qichao. It is now in the collection of the Taiwan HCS Calligraphy Foundation. The full text of the verse reads: “In the tranquility away from secular life, a long flash startled me in my meditation. I saw through the lightning in the sky, it wasn't the same as the fireflies beneath my eyes.”<sup>18</sup> This verse is similar to another verse in *Song of Enlightenment* by Great Master Yongjia: “Forgetting secular life leads to tranquility, spiritual tranquility of clear awareness, empty by nature. This is the way to enlightenment.”<sup>19</sup> By comparing the two verses, we can see that Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing emphasizes the importance of thought in each moment. Thoughts are formed by circumstance, forming a tranquil state free of delusions. There is also the spirituality of existence, an unconscious awareness that stems from the innate mind, creating a state of tranquility and clarity. In this state of tranquility and clarity, one sees that all phenomena in the world are as fleeting as lightning, or, to quote the *Diamond Sutra*, “like dew or a flash of lightning”<sup>20</sup>. One transcends disillusionment from the fleeting nature of the world and achieves a true state of tranquility and clarity.

This calligraphy scroll gives off an overall sense of plainness and simplicity, with smooth, rounded brushstrokes, conveying the verse it depicts as well as a transcendental atmosphere. The piece is characterized by its clear layout design of wide spacing between characters. Dong Qichang was another calligrapher from the same era known for having clear, wide spacing between characters, which was generally at-

tributed to him imitating the style of Yang Ningshi, a calligrapher from the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. According to records, Dong Qichang had a “joy in Zen meeting” with Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing at Longhua Temple in the 16th year of Emperor Wanli’s reign (1588 CE)<sup>21</sup>. Dong Qichang promotes a style of calligraphy that emphasizes “subtlety”, and his brushstrokes were clearly influenced by Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing.

The text of the poem *Bodhi Tree of Faxing Monastery* (fig.2) is as follows: “The seed of Buddhism comes from Tianzhu, high in the mountains. The seed bore fruit from Śakra and Brahma, flowers from the Liang and Tang dynasties. Leaves that protect with blessings, branches of Buddhist teachings. Follow the teachings under the tree, feel refreshed and at ease.” (See *Bodhi Tree of Faxing Monastery*) The first half conveyed the origins of Faxing Monastery, how the spread of Buddhist teachings took root and blossomed there. The second half describes preaching the teachings of Buddha under the Bodhi tree and gaining more disciples. The eloquent poem makes readers feel as if they are under the bodhi tree of Faxing Monastery, liberated and at ease with the blessings of Buddha.

The brushwork in *Bodhi Tree of Faxing Monastery* is condensed, simple, and smooth, reflecting Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing’s profound philosophy and noble, righteous character. The piece subconsciously reveals his understanding of life and calm emotions. The wide spacing, even characters, and relaxed brushstrokes reveal a courteous, tolerant mind of child-like innocence. The neat composition and margins show a peaceful state of mind and the ability to understand things in a macroscopic way.

In the five-character couplet *Broader Vision Through Hard Work* (fig.3), his brushwork went from intricate to simple, simple to marvelous, and back to simplicity. Zhao Huanguang said, “It’s not an exaggeration to say that calligraphy cannot be mastered in just one hundred days... It is also said that it takes three eternities to reach enlightenment. From this, we can see that the two paths are similar.”<sup>22</sup> Tang Linchu also said, “Zen teachings value enlightenment, as do poetry and calligraphy.”<sup>23</sup> They stress that understanding can only be improved through hard work, forming a new understanding of originality and emptiness. As said in Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing’s *Broader Vision Through Hard Work*, “gaze out at the mountains with a head of hair white from hard work.” The art of calligraphy and the practice of Buddhism both require a process of cultivation and enlightenment, a constant cycle of improvement and understanding to achieve true detachment and enlightenment of the mind.

Calligraphy can reflect the yin and yang and all the colorful changes of the world. Regarding how to capture the charm of calligraphy, Yu Shinan said in his work *The Essence of Calligraphy Strokes* that:

To grasp the essence of calligraphy, one must rely on the spiritual perception of things instead of brute force. Ingenuity must be understood by the mind, as it is not accessible to the eyes. Calligraphy is the reflection of the mind. Enlightenment of the mind leads to ingenuity. Like how the brightness of a copper mirror reflects not the craftsman’s skill, channeling the mind through brushstrokes does not rely on brushwork. Instead, one must grasp the nuances

of perception and achieve enlightenment of the spirit and mind. Like how harmonious instruments produce beautiful music, when one channels the mind through the brush, ingenuity will flow in every stroke. Perception through the mind allows one's brushwork to flow freely without excessive flourishes. One cannot comprehend the essence of calligraphy if one focuses on appearance alone<sup>24</sup>.

Yu Shinan stressed the importance of “spiritual perception” and “understanding through the mind”. “Spiritual perception” relies on spontaneous inspiration and cannot be pursued consciously, while “understanding through the mind” refers to understanding how the artistic expression of calligraphy reflects the beauty of all things in nature through the form, brushstrokes, and imagery of the words. Achieving enlightenment of the spirit and mind allows one to ascend to the realm of creative freedom. Although the essence of calligraphy lies in the enlightenment of the mind, there is no denying the importance of acquiring knowledge and dexterous hand movements. This is something that all who practice calligraphy and Buddhist teachings should understand.

### III. Stand for seeing the world for what it is

Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing places a lot of value on the writing of scriptures. He once said, “The writing of scriptures makes one of six types of Buddhist masters”<sup>25</sup>. When writing scriptures, it is important to maintain a steady mind, as Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing said, “The key to writing scriptures is a steady mind.”<sup>26</sup> Zen Buddhism and calligraphy all stem from the mind, as described in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, “All the things that exist in the world were the wonderfully bright inherent mind of Bodhi. The essence of the mind was completely pervading and contained the ten directions.”<sup>27</sup> In the Han dynasty, Yang Xiong proposed in his work *Fayan - Asking About Divine Insight* that “calligraphy is the depiction of the mind.”<sup>28</sup> In his essay *Given to the Zen Monk Xingchuyuan*, Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing said:

When writing calligraphy, I uttered the name of the Buddha with every stroke or punctuation, regardless of form, size, or length. With every stroke and punctuation, my mind flows. I carry on copying scripture without pause or mistake, until the scripture is a part of me, whether I am copying or not, even manifesting in my dreams. Thus I enter a state of utter peace of mind, unbothered by any disturbance or distraction. Thus I am liberated from all troubles. I can attest that nothing I saw or heard distracted me from the scriptures<sup>29</sup>.

Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing promotes copying scripture to clear the mind of outside influences, achieving the ultimate state of “clarity in the face of distractions”. The key to achieving this state is all in a flash of thought. He said, “If one tries to gain enlightenment through copying scripture alone, an ocean of ink wouldn't be enough. If one tries to gain enlightenment through actions alone, they will be overwhelmed

by the distractions of daily life. They must find enlightenment through an epiphany.”<sup>30</sup> Only through an epiphany can one reveal the innate nature of people and reach the Zen realm of clarity, which, when applied to calligraphy, elevates calligraphy to a new realm. When calligraphy is written while the calligrapher is in a state of meditation, each stroke reveals the original state of life, a realization of self-understanding and spiritual liberation from the body and mind to emptiness.

The beauty of exquisitely delicate poetry and the emotional weight of blank spaces in paintings are in the nothingness, or what can be described as ethereal, which means to let go of external appearances and focus on the inner mind, creating a kind of abstract beauty in the image of life. Mildness and lightness do not equal flavorless. Rather, calligraphers should strive to be mild but with substance, light but flavorful, or to “express splendor in archaic simplicity, and connote the best flavor in lightness”.<sup>31</sup> Calligraphers channel their minds into calligraphy. The stillness and peace of their minds will naturally shine through their brushwork. These characteristics show up in Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing’s *Semi-Cursive Calligraphy Scroll* and *Scripture Written in Semi-Cursive While Residing in the Mountains*.

*Semi-Cursive Calligraphy Scroll*<sup>32</sup> (fig.4) was written in the 22nd year of Emperor Wanli’s reign (1594). It was written in memory of Huang Xiantaijun when Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing revisited places from his past, and it is a piece that laments the fast-changing nature of the world. “When I visited this place with you years ago, it was a sight of wild grass and hills. Today we meet again, but the scenery has been replaced by buildings. The streaming lights are thousands of miles long, and the reflection of the moon shines bright. My spirit lightens when I see you. With the world as turbulent as willow catkins in the wind, I am glad we can still enjoy a moment like this.” This scroll was written with smooth fluid strokes full of style and energy. This piece of calligraphy was written with the center-tip, each hair on the brush working in tandem to create spirited lines, making it clear that the piece was written with a clear mind and dexterous hand, full of passion and spontaneity. The saturation of the ink is mesmerizing, varying with each stroke of the brush, creating an indescribably ingenious atmosphere. The piece also shows strength reminiscent of the fearlessness of youth, incorporating all the emotions that the calligrapher wished to express.

*Scripture Written in Semi-Cursive While Residing in the Mountains* (fig.5) talks about the way to liberate oneself from emotions. As the text says, “Anywhere in the world can be a place to reach enlightenment. One only has to let go of distractions to be liberated, there’s no need to look elsewhere. As ancient wisdom says: so long as one stays true to oneself, they are in control of themselves wherever they are. Goodness comes and goes from one’s own mind. Constantly worrying about gains and losses will lead to endless obstacles.”<sup>33</sup> This piece of calligraphy was written with dynamic brushstrokes that display power and restraint, each stroke made with vigor, as energy and strength were channeled into the brush. In terms of brushwork, the brush was tilted to the side, creating strokes that at times resemble the sinews and joints of a mighty bow, and at others, a cloud formation that stretches for a thousand miles. In terms of structure, the words are evenly sized and spaced, exuding a natural feel. Throughout the piece, the texture of the ink also varies between wet and dry, creating a dynamic and unreserved atmosphere.

Lu Ji wrote in *Essay on Literature*, “Lament over falling leaves in ruthless autumn, and rejoice for supple sprigs in budding spring,”<sup>34</sup> speaking to how changing seasons can affect people’s emotions and evoke feelings of sadness or joy. Liu Xie said, “When the colors of things stir, one’s heart is swayed”<sup>35</sup>. Spring makes one joyful, while summer causes one to be irritable, autumn brings gloom, and winter makes one stern. These differences allow art and aesthetics to express the concept that “one responds to varying phases with varying emotions, and use different words depending on different emotions” and “the appearance of things attract one another.”<sup>36</sup> Regarding the subject of aesthetics: “Poets depict the spirit and appearance of objects as they themselves are caught up in the course of things; they apply color and matching sounds, with thoughts lingering on their minds.”<sup>37</sup> In the process of art appreciation, the art incites emotions within the viewer, but the viewer also sees the art through the lens of their own emotions. The movement of objects generates emotions, while the mind associates emotions with objects, until emotions and scenery blend together, and mind and object are one. With a focus on the mind, Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing combined Zen teachings, Zen and Pure Land Buddhism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. His ideas retain traces of the traditional Chinese concept of “unity between man and the universe”. He was also a religious scholar that combined Buddhist teachings, philosophy, and calligraphy.

#### IV. Embody a state of enlightenment

To be natural is to be free of artifice; to be elegant is to be sophisticated and refined. In *Shu Gai*, Liu Xizai wrote: “Calligraphy should be modeled after nature.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, calligraphers must learn from nature. By seeing their mind reflected in all things in the world and incorporating this understanding into calligraphy, they can achieve enlightenment and elevate their calligraphy to extraordinary levels. Hao Jing said, “Free of wants and desires, the mind and hand become one, moving the brush freely until calligrapher and calligraphy too become one, relaxed and changing, channeling ideas through technique. When I write calligraphy, the charm is in its unpredictability. I strive to make strokes natural without extra flourishes so that they reflect what is on my mind,”<sup>39</sup> “When the mind becomes unaware of the hand, and vice versa.”<sup>40</sup> True “understanding” comes when there is complete synergy between the mind and hand when the self and calligraphy become one.

The art of calligraphy in China entered a stage of self-consciousness in the Wei and Jin period. Chinese calligraphy made great advancements thanks to the ideals and pursuits of Jin dynasty rulers. “If you don’t learn calligraphy from the Jin style, your work will not achieve high standards. If you don’t follow the principles of Wang Xizhi, how can you understand the true essence of calligraphy?”<sup>41</sup> Basic aesthetic rules and principles had been established by then, such as Wang Xizhi’s concept of “planning before writing”<sup>42</sup> and Wang Sengqian’s “synergy of mind and hand” and “expression above all else”<sup>43</sup>. The art of calligraphy had matured by the Tang dynasty, with a focus on “Tao and nature” and “calligraphy as an expression of the mind” culminating in the creation, appreciation, education, heritage, development, and separate schools of calligraphy.

Han-shan Te'ching described the inspirations for his calligraphy. "I loved copying works from the Jin and Tang dynasties, finding it to be an elegant pursuit. At first, I did not think about the four calligraphy masters of the Song dynasty. It wasn't until my exile that, whenever think of Su Shi's exile to Dan'er, to a cottage amid palm trees, my calligraphy inadvertently became more similar to his."<sup>44</sup> The style of Han-shan Te'ching's calligraphy can be traced back to him imitating the works of calligraphers from the Jin and Tang periods. His brushstrokes reveal influences from the bold and unrestrained style of Jin calligraphers such as Wang Xizhi and Zhi Yong, as well as the principles of Tang dynasty calligraphers such as Ouyang Xun and Yu Shinan. Later, when he was exiled to Guangdong, he thought about Su Shi's exile to Huangzhou and Hainan Island, reflecting upon his own troubles in middle age, and gained further enlightenment, achieving a state of calm in the face of adversity. Afterward, his calligraphy took on the elegant style of Song calligraphers and gradually formed his personal style.

In *The Book of Profound Calligraphy*<sup>45</sup> (see fig.6), Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing compares the mastery of calligraphy with the archery skill of legendary archer Feng Meng, the music of famed musician Shi Wen, the axe of legendary craftsman Shi, and the skill of renowned craftsman Lun Bian. He called the state of synergy between technique, art, man, and the way to enlightenment "a craft on par with the way to enlightenment", saying,

Though calligraphy is just a trifle craft, there is great wisdom to be found within. All who have mastered the art through the ages understand this, because surely a craft that requires one to glean understanding from heaven and earth requires great wisdom? People often look down on what they perceive to be a mere craft, but those who've gained complete mastery of their craft, like Feng Meng's archery, Shi Wen's music, Craftsman Shi's axe, Lun Bian's craftsmanship, and anyone who rises to the top of their field possesses unfathomable strength. They say the hand follows the mind. Some people seem to naturally know what to do, but that's because they've understood the craft, for how can one achieve mastery with no effort? (See *The Book of Profound Calligraphy*)

When craft and the way to enlightenment meet synergy between the mind and hand, they create unfathomable wonders. In the process of writing calligraphy, "The mind will not grow tired of the pursuit of excellence, whereas the hands will not forget to apply familiar skills. With practiced movements and rules memorized by heart, one can naturally write freely with ease"<sup>46</sup>. Also,

Think before writing. Channel your thoughts into each stroke carefully and meticulously. Focus your gaze and attention, clear your mind of distractions like gains and losses or victory and defeat. Make your mind as free as if you can traverse the universe from your desk. No matter how big the universe, no matter how many things fill the world, nothing should dis-



tract you from your brushstrokes for even a moment. In my view, if you can do all this, you can become close to if not the best at calligraphy. When a craft is mastered to this degree, is it not the Way? (See *The Book of Profound Calligraphy*)

Sun Guoting's *Shu Pu* also said, "Think before writing, let the brush move unrestrained and free, flowing with your thoughts, like how Hongyang considers the whole picture when managing finances, and how a skillful butcher sees the whole cow." When one's craft and the Way become one, reaching a state of purity, it's like Zong Baihua said, "Zen is both ultimate stillness in movement and ultimate movement in stillness. Still yet luminous, luminous yet still, this combination of movement and stillness taps into the core of life."<sup>47</sup>

Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing believes that the quality of a piece of calligraphy lies not in the techniques used or how similar it is to the piece it is imitating. He said,

What makes a piece of calligraphy good cannot be put into words. Throughout history, many have copied calligraphy, but none can capture its essence. Only I said, it is like a wild goose flying across the sky, or like a reflection on a lake in autumn. Spoken by a Zen philosopher, this is a revolutionary description. If one can truly understand the meaning behind this, they will be able to write calligraphy of the highest standards<sup>48</sup>.

And so to Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing, the quality of calligraphy lies not in whether one can copy works that come before, but in whether the calligrapher can achieve a state of calm and stillness. If we judge calligraphy from imitation skills alone, then it's much like he said: "Throughout history, many have copied calligraphy, but none can capture its essence." Calligraphy of true quality must transcend emotions and thought. Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing believes that calligraphy should not be limited to the scope of emotions and feelings but to reflect the calligrapher's innate self. He also said, "Finding this essence with the naked eye is as difficult as looking for a bird in the cold sky, or a fish in a rushing autumn river. Finding it through words and language, on the other hand, is like seeing with blind eyes, just visions in a dream."<sup>49</sup> To view a piece through the lens of characters and brushwork alone is to fall into the dichotomy of "a wild goose flying across the sky" and "seeing with blind eyes". Only by channeling the innate mind through words can one become enlightened to the state of Zen.

"Subtle enlightenment" often emerges by chance. This is true for Zen adepts as well as calligraphers. There is "jiewu" (enlightenment through understanding) of cultivation after enlightenment, and "zhengwu" (awakening through realization) of cultivation to enlightenment. "Jiewu" is like starting a fire with flint. After the fire is started, one must add kindling and oil to sustain its flames. "Zhengwu", on the other hand, is the result of cultivation over a long period of time and requires continued practice after enlightenment. The gradual or sudden enlightenment of Zen adepts and calligraphers rely on the culmina-

tion of their everyday practices. Only with the accumulation of hard work can calligraphers wield a brush and channel their minds with ease. “The wonders of calligraphy reach the heavens, so one must practice and hone their skills until they achieve synergy of the mind and hand. When one wields a brush with confidence in their heart, they will be able to channel their spirit and express it on paper.”<sup>50</sup> This is the best explanation of “jiewu” and “zhengwu”.

*The Book of Profound Calligraphy*, currently in the collection of Shanghai Museum. Written in the 38th year of Emperor Wanli’s reign (1610) on the Furong River of Shaoyang. The book mainly comprises essays on calligraphy theory in the first half and a collection of letters in the second. Also included are “Biography of Master Han-Shan” by Guo Tingling and prefaces by Da Zhao and Di Pingzi. The first half of the book talks about one’s state of mind before and after writing calligraphy, using vivid metaphors to express the idea of beauty with profound Zen wisdom.

To write good calligraphy, one needs to be in a bright and clean space, achieve synergy between the mind and the scenery, and concentrate before putting pen to paper. Before doing all that, one needs to clear the mind of distractions, so that one’s emotions are still as the reflection of the moon on a still river. When everything is just faintly visible, illumination brings calm. (*The Book of Profound Calligraphy*)

When writing calligraphy, the surrounding environment and the calligrapher’s state of mind are major factors that influence whether a piece is successful or not. As Sun Guoting said, “When the five discords coincide, the mind is blocked and the hand is checked. When the five harmonies concur, the spirit issues forth freely, and the brush moves with ease.”<sup>51</sup> If one has “synergy of mind and scenery” and “lighthearted spirit” while writing, with mind and body in a state of purity and bliss, their strokes will improve as if moved by divine forces. Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing said,

Move slowly, and before writing, one’s spirit must be like an eagle in the sky, like reflections in an autumn lake, or like a general about to direct soldiers into formation. One should hold the brush like how Houyi held his arrows, make strokes like an athlete stretching, structure characters as neatly as Gongshu Ban’s blueprints, maintain the right pace like how Lun Bian chopped wood, and make sure each stroke and punctuation is made without hesitation, each turn made at the right pace. (*The Book of Profound Calligraphy*)

“His idea of creating liberating imagery is the extension of freeing one’s innate temperament. He often used the imagery of emptiness, a vast ocean, a cold lake, the bright moon, ice and snow, the moon reflected in water, flowers reflected in a mirror, and other metaphors drawn from the spacious clarity of nature to paint a picture of the spaciousness and clarity of our innate temperament that can be felt and

imagined.”<sup>52</sup> Through these metaphors, one experiences the emptiness of all Dharma and returns to the emptiness of one’s true mind, expressing that the mind’s perception of one’s surroundings is Zen Buddhists’ enlightenment about emptiness and the non-self and the process of understanding that the mind can bend to surroundings but not the other way around.

The second half of this book includes *The Three Realms are an Abode of Dreams, the Four Births are a Record of Dreams* (fig.7). Compared to *The Book of Profound Calligraphy*, this piece emphasizes the extension of horizontal strokes, with right-falling strokes extending towards the bottom right, exaggerated strokes like a boatman’s paddle, and flatter characters. He also liked lengthening the final hanging needle stroke to create an open and relaxed atmosphere. The piece features a combination of squared and rounded brush-strokes, a tight composition, and wide and stable spacing. Overall, it looks dynamic and spirited, channeling the wonders of nature.

In *Six Poems* (fig.8), Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing uses simple words to convey profound Buddhist teachings, like in the poem *Ode to the Heart*:

When the golden garuda dies, its flesh and bones scatter and rot. Only its heart remains intact, round, lustrous, and dazzlingly bright. When the dragon king takes it for his pearl, it can obliterate a thousand years of darkness. When the wheel-turning king obtains it as a wish-fulfilling pearl, it can save all that’s wretched in the world. How is it that we humans use it daily and yet cannot see it<sup>53</sup> ?

Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing’s assertion that “poetry is Zen” is documented in “Miscellaneous Essays”: “When discussing poetry, people of yore all compared it to Zen, without knowing that poetry is true Zen.”<sup>54</sup> The line revealed the aesthetic realm of poetry and Zen as one, as well as the truth that “poetry is true Zen”. The focus of this poem is in the pearl being a metaphor for Buddha nature. Everyone in this world possesses a cintamani pearl (Buddha nature) without knowing it, so they toil away in the Six Realms of Reincarnation. Such a pity!

Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing said in *Preface to Six Poems*, “The key to Buddhist teachings is in the mind. A lost mind leads to the pain of impermanence. Understanding that pain is impermanent leads to a state of emptiness, emptiness leads to the state of non-self, and achieving non-self allows one to transcend life and death. This is the message of the Tripiṭaka.”<sup>55</sup> Here, Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing clearly stated the connection between the six poems, stressing that they are all connected to the innate mind. Those whose minds are lost will feel the pain of life, death, and impermanence. Transcending confusion and reaching the realm of true emptiness is the only way to fully understand Buddhist teachings. This piece of calligraphy is written naturally, channeling the natural flow of the mind. It is reminiscent of the Jin period’s “lonesome, loose, simple, and distant” aesthetic.

The *Yongjia Song of Enlightenment* written by Zen Master Xuanjue is a Yuefu poem comprising more than 1800 characters. Written with a beautiful style and quick-witted lines, the poem elaborates on the mystery of Buddhist teachings with the state of enlightenment through realization and is a masterpiece of Zen literature.

Zen Buddhism emphasizes epiphanies. The pursuit of the innate nature of epiphanies is itself an epiphany about innate nature. Therefore, *Yongjia Song of Enlightenment* begins with: “Do you not see? Practitioners of the way to enlightenment live at ease, effortless, and have no more to learn. They need not remove delusion or seek truth, for the true nature of ignorance is Buddha nature. The illusion of this empty body is the Dharmakaya.”<sup>56</sup> By getting rid of trivial studies and denouncing active practices, one will not be too preoccupied with external appearances to understand their own inherent nature. Experiencing the universe’s original state of emptiness through “inaction” is the main goal of cultivation. “If one nature is understood, all nature is understood. One Dharma contains all others. One moon universally appears on all waters. All reflected moons are one moon.”<sup>57</sup> Look upon the world through its innate state to reach the realm of full enlightenment, where one’s innate temperament becomes complete, and the mind is one with Buddha.

Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing’s *Semi-Cursive Calligraphy of Yongjia Song of Enlightenment* (fig.9) was written in the 38th year of Emperor Wanli’s reign (1610) when Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing was 64 years old. It is similar in terms of calligraphy style to Wang Xizhi’s *Preface to the Sacred Teachings*, though his brushwork had a strong personal style that is vastly different from the stream of semi-cursive works produced by late-Ming dynasty calligraphers. Hu Chuanhai said, “Still yet still dynamic, poised yet tender and beautiful. Each character is independent, but together they form a rhythm through the slant of each word, varying sizes, and different thickness and weight of each stroke. There is strength in where the words expand and style where the writing is more reserved.”<sup>58</sup> Throughout the piece, there are heavy strokes that catch the eye, as well as light, dynamic strokes, and the writing is as natural as a spring flowing down the mountains. The piece gives off a warm, peaceful style, with a natural flow that is easy to read, full of ancient charm and present-day interests.

In the 37th year of Emperor Wanli’s reign (1609), Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing organized the reconstruction of the Mahavira Hall of Nanhua Temple at Caoxi. This impacted the economic interests of the monks who were like feudal lords there. Many monks of Nanhua Temple questioned Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing’s actions and incited a crowd against him. Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing described them as being “as chaotic as a rebellion”<sup>59</sup>. Amid the chaos, Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing began reciting the *Diamond Sutra* and realized that his actions focused too much on exterior appearances, and that the reconstruction of Nanhua Temple, the founding temple of Zen Buddhism, is just another illusion in life with no real benefit. He was inspired by this to write the book *Resolution from the Diamond Sutra*. By the time the book was finished, the controversy had died down. However, that wasn’t the end of his troubles. Some crooked monks drew up false accusations against him and took him to court. Han-Shan Te-Ch’ing was ordered to say on a boat on Furong

River to await his trial. Little did he know that the case would be stalled for two years, leaving Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing stranded on Furong River with no money left to spend and plagued by disease. It was the most difficult period of his life. *Semi-Cursive Calligraphy of the Yongjia Song of Enlightenment* and *The Book of Profound Calligraphy*, two important pieces of calligraphy Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing left behind, were created during this period. The sign-off of *The Book of Profound Calligraphy* reads "Written by Te-Ch'ing on the 14th day of the 7th lunar month of the 38th year of Emperor Wanli's reign on a boat on Shaoyang's Furong River." and the sign-off of *Yongjia Song of Enlightenment* reading "Written by Old Man Han-Shan on a boat in Zhenyang on the 15th day of the 9th lunar month in the Xin Hai Year of Emperor Wanli's reign"<sup>60</sup> is proof of this. Strong characters often emerge in the face of adversity and helplessness. Su Shi wrote *The Cold Food Observance* - known as one of the three great works of semi-cursive calligraphy - and the literary masterpiece *Former Ode on the Red Cliffs* while living in exile in Huangzhou. As for Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing, he developed his personal calligraphy style of natural elegance and harmony in his time of adversity.

By delving into the emptiness and innate mind of all things in nature, Zen Buddhism produces an ethereal, subtle, and delicate aesthetic. Zen Master Qingyuan Weixin said, "Thirty years ago, before I practiced Zen, I saw mountains as mountains, water as water. Later, as I began to comprehend more knowledge, I saw mountains as no longer just mountains, water as no longer just water. Resting here today, alas, I see that mountains are still mountains, and water is still water."<sup>61</sup> At first glance, the mountains and water are objective and lasting entities. The viewer, with no self-awareness, gleaned only a surface-level understanding. The simple and honest style of Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's early calligraphy works reflect such characteristics, expressing an innocent nature without a facade and following his original mindset, reminiscent of the line "Amid this deserted mountain full of fallen leaves, where might I find traces of you?"<sup>62</sup> This is the early stage when the mountains look like mountains and water looks like water, the same state of mind that someone just starting to follow Buddhism would be in when trying to approach the concept of emptiness. After studying Zen teachings, one learns that appearance isn't always reality, that the reality of mountains and water is constantly changing, like flowers in a fog. This is where one sees the perspective of the mind, the realm of emptiness, like "in the deserted mountain, water flows and flowers bloom"<sup>63</sup>. At this stage, Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's calligraphy also focused on the ethereal and light, expressing how he understood the perspectives of everyday people. Finally, there is enlightenment, an epiphany, where one learns to live in the moment, at ease and liberating, where the mountain is again just a mountain, and water is just like water, like the line "from remote antiquity, sky is ever present". At this stage, Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's calligraphy had taken on the wonders of natural elegance and smooth harmony, reflecting his understanding of the innate mind.<sup>64</sup>

## V. Conclusion

With the philosophy that "the three realms are mind-only and the myriad dharmas are mere consciousness", Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing promoted the syncretism of Zen and scriptural teaching, synergy of

mind and appearance, cultivation of Zen and Pure Land Buddhism, and the shared origin of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, carrying forward the ideal of spreading Buddhism and becoming one of the key figures of the Buddhist renaissance in the late-Ming dynasty. With a literary view focused on the mind, Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing explored the calligraphy styles of the Jin and Tang periods, working hard until he could wield a brush with ease. His belief that enlightenment allows one's craft to improve to the level of the Way made waves in terms of calligraphy theory and practice, making him one of the best calligrapher monks of the late-Ming dynasty.

Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing was adept in semi-cursive and cursive calligraphy. Each of his pieces has a different style. His semi-cursive is reserved and concentrated, gentle and harmonious, simple yet with a hint of tender and elegant style. His cursive is fluid and expressive, wild and grand, dynamic with natural strength. Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's brushwork is graceful and elegant, the structure of each character dignified and upright. His work features wide and ethereal composition and warm and natural ink tones, all of which stem from his profound Zen cultivation and vast knowledge. His Zen-style calligraphy are a consolidation of spiritual force throughout heaven and earth and precious cultural heritage.

In short, Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's calligraphy is neutral and harmonious, with content full of Zen imagery, and his calligraphy theories include exploring hidden ideas and discussing subtle principles. Among the works by monks, Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing's calligraphy stands out and has high aesthetic value. He was well-versed in the scriptures of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, but was never preoccupied with fame and fortune. Instead, he spent his time indoors copying scripture, and traveled to promote Buddhism. The contents of his calligraphy works show care for life and the wisdom of liberation to the Pure Land of Amitabha. His character and calligraphy are a model for the world.

## Notes

- 1 Qin dynasty, Chang, T'ingyu ed. *Dynastic History of the Ming - Biography*, Vol.83: Wang Shouren. Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org>, May 2020.
- 2 Ming dynasty, Wang, Shouren. "The Complete Works of Wang Wencheng - Preface in Farewell to Zhan Ruoshui", Vol.7, Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org>, May 2020.
- 3 Qin dynasty, Chang, T'ingyu ed. *Dynastic History of the Ming - Biography*, Vol.129: Li Zhi. Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org>, May 2020.
- 4 Ming dynasty, Li, Zhi. Zhang Jianyeh ed. *The Annotated Complete Works of Li Zhi*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2010, p.276.
- 5 Qin dynasty, Chang, T'ingyu ed.: *Dynastic History of the Ming - Biography*, Vol.176: Dong Qichang. Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org>, May 2020.
- 6 Huang Dun. *History of Chinese Calligraphy - Yuan and Ming Dynasties*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Publishing House, 2001, pp.423-435.
- 7 *Commentary on the Chronological Biography of Grand Master Han-Shan*, Vol.1. CBETA supplement, Vol. 14. <http://tripitaka.cbeta.org>, April 2020.
- 8 Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing said, "The Buddha said that the three realms are mind-only and the myriad dharmas are mere consciousness. All Buddhadharma is only further exposition on these two lines, so everyone will be able to distinguish and have faith in this reality. The passages of the sacred and the mundane are only paths of delusion or enlightenment within your own mind. Besides the mind, all karmas of virtue and vice are unobtainable." *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Reply to Vice Censor-in-chief Zheng Kunyan*, Vol. 1, pp.70-71.
- 9 Ming dynasty, Zhongfeng, Mingben. *Comprehensive Records of Words by Monk Zhongfeng at Mt. Tianmu*, featured in *Selection of Chinese Buddhist Philosophy*, Book 3, Vol. 1. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1987.
- 10 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Preface to the Mental Factors of Master Zuo's Spring and Autumn Annals*" Vol. 19, pp. 1022.
- 11 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - To the Zen Monk Yujue*, Vol. 5, p.256.
- 12 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - To the Zen Monk Mingdao*, Vol. 9, p.426.
- 13 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Reply to Disciple Gong*, Vol. 14, pp. 743-744.
- 14 Ming dynasty, Xiang, Mu. *Earnest Advice on Calligraphy - Deification*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985, p.14.
- 15 Ming dynasty, Xiang, Mu. *Earnest Advice on Calligraphy - Mindset*. p.16.
- 16 Ming dynasty, Xiang, Mu. *Earnest Advice on Calligraphy - Distinction*. p.3.
- 17 Ming dynasty, Xiang, Mu. *Earnest Advice on Calligraphy - Mindset*. p.15.
- 18 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Twenty Poems on Mountain Living*, Vol. 49, pp.2657-2658.
- 19 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - To Zhou Ziyin*, Vol. 12, p.511. Verse also recorded in: Tang dynasty, Xuanjue. *Compilation of the Works of Zen Master Yongjia - Song of Shamatha*, Vol. 4.

- 20 Original text: “All conditioned phenomena are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a shadow, like dew or a flash of lightning, and thus we shall perceive them.” Late-Qin dynasty, Kumārajīva, trans. *Diamond Sutra*, Vol. 1, *Taishō Tripiṭaka*, CBETA, cbetaonline.edu.tw, p.752.
- 21 Note: Dong Qichang wrote in “Joy in Zen”, “The Doctrine of the Mean states that the Noble Man is cautious in the place where he is not seen, and apprehensive in the place where he is not heard. In other words, a noble man acts in private as he would in public. This level of apprehension is not enough. Indeed, he must observe situations in advance. But how would one observe what has yet to happen? In the winter of Wu Zi Year, I attended a gathering with Tang Yuanzheng, Yuan Boxiu, Qu Dongguan, Wu Guanwo, Wu Benru, and Xiao Xuanpu at Longhua Temple. In our conversation that night, I asked Master Han’shan what the passage means. Qu Dongguan said, ‘Look for signs in places without signs.’ I disagreed and replied, ‘That is the last place where one should look.’ I then said, the drum cannot produce the sound of bells and vice versa. The two are irrelevant, without beginning or end. Qu said, ‘That doesn’t matter.’ Again, I disagreed. That night, Tang and Yuan, being new to Buddhist teachings, couldn’t comprehend what I was saying. Even Master Han’shan found reason on both sides and did not take part in the discussion.” See Ming dynasty, Dong, Qichang. *Essays of Huachan Study - Joy of Zen*, Vol. 4, p.100.
- 22 Ming dynasty, Zhao, Huanguang. *Essays on Cold Mountain - Calligraphy*. Yang, Jialuo, ed. *Anthology of Art*, Vol.1, Book 3. Taipei: World Book, 1962, pp.50–51.
- 23 Ming dynasty, Tang, Linchu. *Shu Zhi - Part 1. Imperial Compilation of Paintings and Calligraphy*, Kanseki Repository, <https://www.kanripo.org>, May 2020
- 24 Tang dynasty, Yu, Shinan. *The Essence of Calligraphy Strokes - Ingenuity*. Yang, Chengyin, ed., Bian Pingshu, Jin, Ju’ai, annot. *Commentary on Chinese Calligraphy Theories Through the Ages*. Hangzhou: Hangzhou Publishing Group, 2016, p.50.
- 25 *Master Han-Shan’s Dream Roamings - Given to the Zen Monk Xingchuyuan*, Vol. 9, p.447.
- 26 Same as note 25, p.448.
- 27 Tang dynasty, Pramiti, trans. *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, Vol. 3, *Jiaying Tripitaka* (T19n0945), 2020.
- 28 Han dynasty, Yang, Xiong, “*Fayan - Asking About Divine Insight*” Vol.5, “Speech cannot fully express what is on the mind, nor can writing fully express speech. What a conundrum. Only sages comprehend the true meaning of words and achieve the substantial embodiment of standards in their writing. The white sun shone down on him; the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers cleansed him. So powerfully does his example flow onward that none have been a match for him. Nothing is as good as speech for exchanging remarks during face-to-face meetings, expressing the heart’s desire of communicating people’s pent-up emotions. Nothing compares with writing for fully delineating the affairs of the whole realm, for recording events of the distant or remote past, for clarifying what has been obscured by the mist of time, or for transmitting obscure concepts over thousands of miles. Therefore, speech is the sound of the mind, whereas writing is its images. When sounds



and images assume form, then the noble and petty appear in sharp contrast! For sounds and images are surely the means with which to see what motivates the noble and petty alike.” Wang, Rongbao, *Fayan Annotations*, Chapter 8. Beijing: China Books, 1991, pp.2–3.

29 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Given to the Zen Monk Mingdao*, Vol. 9, pp.447–448.

30 *Master HanShan's Dream Roamings - Written After the Zen Monk Ruizhilin Wrote the Avatamsaka Sutra with His Own Blood* Vol. 31, p.1609.

31 Song dynasty, Su Shi. *Postscript to The Poetry Collection of Huang Zisi*, Vol. 2. Included in Yang, Jialuo, ed. *Anthology of Art- Prefaces and Postscripts of the Song Dynasty*, p.81.

32 Full text of *Semi-Cursive Calligraphy Scroll*: When I visited this place with you years ago, it was a sight of wild grass and hills. Today we meet again, but the scenery has been replaced by buildings. The streaming lights are thousands of miles long, and the reflection of the moon shines bright. My spirit lightens when I see you. With the world as turbulent as willow catkins in the wind, I am glad we can still enjoy a moment like this. I've brought a few people with me. We are all doing well. We talked unreservedly through the night, and the conversation brightened our spirits. Never forget the joy of today. Perhaps there will never be greater happiness. After the events of tonight, I look upon people and see that they are all sleeping in blissful ignorance. From the moment I first met Huang Xiantaijun upon arriving at sea, I saw him as my own family. Tragically, Taijun passed away before his time. Prior to his death, he entrusted us poets-monks with his wishes, and told his sons: do not forget your brothers after I am gone. How sad! In the ten years after Taijun's death, I grieved and paid tribute to him every year, as dutifully as his sons. Only one of his young sons surpassed me in mourning. Nine more years have passed. This winter, I came to the wild with Shouguang Fuwong and reminisced about the days when Taijun was still alive. Woe is us! In life, life and death comes and goes like a dream. It must have been fate that brought me and these talented people together here. All of us are here to pay our respects, except for a young man who wanted a new verse in memory of Taijun. Alas! He wants to write a new verse, as if I would forget my old friend? What I cannot express through poetry, I write in this text. Written at Haiyin Temple on the 2nd lunar month of the Jia Wu Year in Emperor Wanli's reign.

33 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - To the Young Monk Hanhuiqi on Living in the Mountains* Vol. 6, p.317.

34 Jin dynasty, Lu Ji, *Essay on Literature*, Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org>, May 2020.

35 Spring and autumn follow each other in sequence, with the brooding gloom of Yin and the easeful brightness of Yang. When the colors of things stir, one's heart is swayed. When the Yang force sprouts, black ants scurry to their hole, and when the Yin begins to coalesce, the mantis feasts. It touches the responses of even the tiniest insects: the four seasons stir things into movement deeply. Mankind's intelligence is like a piece of beautiful jade, their delicate temperament like a wondrous flower. With all the bright countenances of things calling to one another, how can man find stillness amid all this? When spring comes around, feelings of delight and ease spread. In the heat of summer,

the mind lurches irritably. The clear skies and crisp winds of autumn make our gloomy thoughts drift far, while the frost and snow of winter send us into grim and stern brooding. The seasons come with different sceneries, different objects take on different appearances. Our emotions change with the scenery, expressed through words. A single leaf or the sound of insects is enough to stir the heart, let alone a beautiful autumn night of crisp winds and bright moon, or a spring morning amid lush trees! Liang dynasty, Liu, Xie. *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons - The Sensual Colors of Physical Things*. Shanghai: People's Literature Publishing House, 1961, p.693.

36 Same as note 35.

37 Same as note 35.

38 Qing dynasty, Liu, Xizai. *Yi Gai - Shu Gai*. See Institute of Ancient Books Collation, East China Normal University, ed., *Writings on Calligraphy Through the Ages*, p.716.

39 Ming dynasty, Hao, Jing. *A Scholar-Official's Theory on Calligraphy*. Cui, Erping, ed. *Writings on Calligraphy Through the Ages Continued*. Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts Publishing House, 2004, pp. 175-176.

40 Song dynasty, Huang, Tingjian. *Lun Shu* (Treatise on Calligraphy). Original text: "Zhang Xu's brushstrokes resemble a folded hairpin, Yan Zhenqing's strokes like spontaneous water stains from a leaking roof, Wang Xizhi's rounded strokes look like they were drawn on sand with an awl or pressed into ink paste, Huai Su's brushstrokes evoke the image of birds flying from treetops or startled snake slithering into bushes, and Suo Jing's strokes have the strength of a silver hook or a scorpion's tail. These brushstrokes all have one thing in common: they are achieved when there is a synergy between the mind and hand." Institute of Ancient Books Collation, East China Normal University, ed., *"Writings on Calligraphy Through the Ages"*, p.356.

41 Ming dynasty, Xiang, Mu. "Earnest Advice on Calligraphy - Rules", pp. 18.

42 (Alleged) Jin dynasty, Wang, Xizhi. *Shu Lun*. Yang Chengyin, ed. *Commentary on Chinese Calligraphy Theories Through the Ages*. p.155.

43 Southern dynasties, Wang, Sengqian. *Ode to Meaningful Brushwork*. Yang, Chengyin, ed. *Commentary on Chinese Calligraphy Theories Through the Ages*, p.246.

44 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Miscellaneous Essays* Vol. 39, p.2077.

45 Full text of *The Book of Profound Calligraphy*: Though calligraphy is just a trifle craft, there is great wisdom to be found within. All who have mastered the art through the ages understand this, because surely a craft that requires one to glean understanding from heaven and earth requires great wisdom? People often look down on what they perceive to be a mere craft, but those who've gained complete mastery of their craft, like Feng Meng's archery, Shi Wen's music, Craftsman Shi's axe, Lun Bian's craftsmanship, and anyone who rises to the top of their field possesses unfathomable strength. They say the hand follows the mind. Some people seem to naturally know what to do, but that's because they've understood the craft, for how can one achieve mastery with no effort?

Here's a general overview: To write good calligraphy, one needs to be in a bright and clean space, achieve synergy between the mind and the scenery, and concentrate before putting pen to paper. Before doing all that, one needs to clear the mind of distractions, so that one's emotions are still as the reflection of the moon on a still river. When everything is just faintly visible, illumination brings calm. Move slowly, and before writing, one's spirit must be like an eagle in the sky, like reflections in an autumn lake, or like a general about to direct soldiers into formation. One should hold the brush like how Houyi held his arrows, make strokes like an athlete stretching, structure characters as neatly as Gongshu Ban's blueprints, maintain the right pace like how Lun Bian chopped wood, and make sure each stroke and punctuation is made without hesitation, each turn made at the right pace. Think before writing. Channel your thoughts into each stroke carefully and meticulously. Focus your gaze and attention, clear your mind of distractions like gains and losses or victory and defeat. Make your mind as free as if you can traverse the universe from your desk. No matter how big the universe, no matter how many things fill the world, nothing should distract you from your brushstrokes for even a moment. In my view, if you can do all this, you can become close to if not the best at calligraphy. When a craft is mastered to this degree, is it not the Way? Written by Te-Ching on the 14th day of the 7th lunar month of the 38th year of Emperor Wanli's reign on a boat on Shaoyang's Furong River.

- 46 Tang dynasty, Sun Guoting. *Shu Pu*. Yang Chengyin ed., Bian Pingshu, Jin Ju'ai annot. *Commentary on Chinese Calligraphy Theories Through the Ages*, p.82.
- 47 Zong Baihua. *Strolling in Aesthetics*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1981, p.64.
- 48 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Miscellaneous Essays*, Vol. 39, pp.2077–2078.
- 49 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Preface to the Dream Travels Poetry Collection*, Vol. 47, p.2551.
- 50 Sheng, Ximing. *Analysis of Calligraphy*. Ji, Fukun, ed. *A Summary of Theories of Chinese Calligraphy*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Fine Arts Publishing House, 2000, p.325.
- 51 Note: The five harmonies are being happy in spirit and free from other duties, having intelligence and quick wit, genial weather with the right moisture in the air, compatible ink and paper, and spontaneous desire to write calligraphy. The five discords are: Alarmed mind and preoccupied body, opposed will and constricted energy, dry wind and hot weather, incompatible ink and paper, and exhaustion and a tired hand. Tang dynasty, Sun, Guoting. "Shu Pu". See Yang, Chengyin ed., Bian, Pingshu, Jin Ju'ai annot. *Commentary on Chinese Calligraphy Theories Through the Ages*, pp.80–81.
- 52 Tseng, Chiung-Yao "On Zen Perspective and Artistic Conception in the Writings of Liberation by Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing - Mengyouji as Example", *Journal of Chinese Literature of National Cheng Kung University*, Vol. 43, December 2013, p.160.
- 53 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Six Poems*, Vol. 47, p.2556.
- 54 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Miscellaneous Essays*, Vol 39, p.2087.

- 55 *Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings - Preface to Six Poems*, Vol. 32, p.1706.
- 56 Zen Master Xuanjue, *Yongjia Song of Enlightenment*. See “*The Taishō Tripitaka*” Vol. 48, No. 2014.
- 57 Same as note 56.
- 58 Introduction to *Master Te-Ch'ing's Semi-Cursive Calligraphy of the Song of Enlightenment*. Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts Publishing House. 2004.
- 59 *Annotated Chronicles of Master Han-Shan*, Vol. 2.
- 60 Qing dynasty, Gu Zuyu, *Dushi Fangyu Jiyao (Essence of Historical Geography) - Guangdong III*, Vol. 102. Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org>, May 2020.
- 61 Song dynasty, Pu, Ji. *Compendium of Five Lamps - Zen Master Qingyuan Weixin*, Vol. 17. Taipei: Wen Chin Publishing, May 1986, p.1135.
- 62 Tang dynasty, Wei, Yingwu. “To Toaist Priest Quanjiao in the Mountains”, Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org>, May 2020.
- 63 Song dynasty, Su Shi. “Ode to the Eighteen Great Arhats”, Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org>, May 2020.
- 64 Song dynasty, Pu, Ji. *Compendium of Five Lamps - Zen Master Tianzhu Chonghui of Suzhou*, Vol. 2, p.66.

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