

Relationship between Calligraphy and Meteorology

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Abstract Since ancient times, calligraphy and meteorology have had an inseparable relationship. Wang Xizhi's *Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion* records the beautiful scenery of mild wind and bright sun, as well as the relaxed and joyful mood of people in such weather. Su Shi's *Cold Food Calligraphy Copybook* records the scenery of solar terms and the author's psychological changes during these solar terms through calligraphy. The *Quick Snow and Clear Time Calligraphy Copybook* also reflects the grandeur of snowy days and the customs of literati recording weather and sharing it with friends. In Sun Guoting's *Shupu*, it is clearly stated that the third element of the "five harmony and five obedience" refers to the clear sky, humid air, and pleasant climate, and excellent climatic conditions are conducive to writing.

Key words Calligraphy; Meteorology

DOI 10.19547/j.issn2152-3940.2024.04.003

1 Influence of weather on calligraphers' mood

In the *Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion* (Fig. 1), it is mentioned that at the beginning of late spring, it is suitable to go out and play, and celebrate the Shangsi Festival with friends. On this day, the sky is clear and the wind is gentle. The visibility is very good, and people feel comfortable. They can also look up at the vastness of the universe and observe the abundance of all things on the earth. Therefore, they see the beauty of the world, and feel open-minded and particularly relaxed. They fully experience the joy of sight and hearing, and are so happy that they want to sing loudly.

It naturally pushes from the clear blue sky and gentle spring breeze towards the vast universe and all things in the vast world, creating a beautiful and elegant atmosphere with a cheerful and smooth mood. Therefore, the writing of Wang Xizhi's *Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion* is very natural and smooth. It was written while enjoying the wine, expressing the author's relaxed and comfortable mentality, pouring emotions into calligraphy creation, and endowing it with a true soul^[1].

The *Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion* has a light and ethereal atmosphere throughout, with a natural and graceful style, and a graceful brushwork; the technique is both calm and unconventional, with varying sizes; it has both carefully arranged artistic craftsmanship and no traces of artificial carving, naturally created^[2]. This is partly related to the good weather conditions at that time and the happy gathering of friends. As a literati with a global vision, the *Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion* has shifted from expressing joyful emotions to reflecting on life, with a high degree of integration between literary thought and book meaning. It ex-

presses reflections on the past and present, as well as the pursuit of the meaning of human life. The writing style of the *Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion* is continuous and full of passion, becoming a model for integrating life emotions into literature and displaying them in books. It has been widely regarded as the "first running script in the world" by later generations and still exudes the broad, elegant, and graceful style of the Wei and Jin dynasties.

It can be inferred that the psychological state of calligraphers can affect their works. As stated in Sun Guoting's *Shupu*, Wang Xizhi was depressed when writing the *Yue Yi Lun*; when writing *Praise of Dongfang Shuo Painting*, his thoughts were magnificent and wonderful; when writing the *Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion*, emotions flowed gracefully and the spirit transcended. This is because calligraphers also laugh when they encounter happy things, and lament when they hear sad things. Calligraphy, like the *Book of Songs* and the *Li Sao*, is a manifestation of emotions. In spring and summer, people tend to feel relaxed, while in autumn and winter, people tend to feel sentimental. These are all caused by changes in natural festivals^[3].

Su Dongpo's *Cold Food Calligraphy Copybook* is like this (Fig. 2). This calligraphy copybook was written on the fourth day of April in 1082. It was raining, and Su Dongpo was lost in thought by the side of the desk. He picked up writing brush and thought about that he had been exiled to Huangzhou for three years. Every year, he regretted the passing of spring, but it seemed that there is no need for human regret either. Spring rain in 1082 was endless, lasting for two consecutive months, which made people feel depressed. He heard in sorrowful sleep that the crabapple flowers have withered, and the fallen petals after the rain have fallen onto the mud, appearing messy. Beautiful flowers wither in the rain, like being carried away by someone powerful in the middle of the night, leaving one helpless. What is the differ-

ence between this and a sick teenager whose hair has already turned gray after getting sick? During the consecutive rainy seasons, the spring river water surged high, as if it was about to sink into a door, and there was no sign of the rain stopping. Su Dongpo joked to himself, "look at this small house, it's like a fishing boat, as if drifting in the vast misty water". And seeing the kitchen empty, only some vegetables could be cooked, and the stove

was burning with wet reeds. The Cold Food Festival has arrived, but he was suddenly unknown until saw a crow holding paper ash. His thoughts turned, wanting to go back and serve the court. Unfortunately, the imperial court was out of reach. He wanted to return to his hometown, but his ancestral tomb was thousands of miles away. He can only cry like Ruan Ji when he was at a loss, but his heart was as dead as ashes and cannot be rekindled.

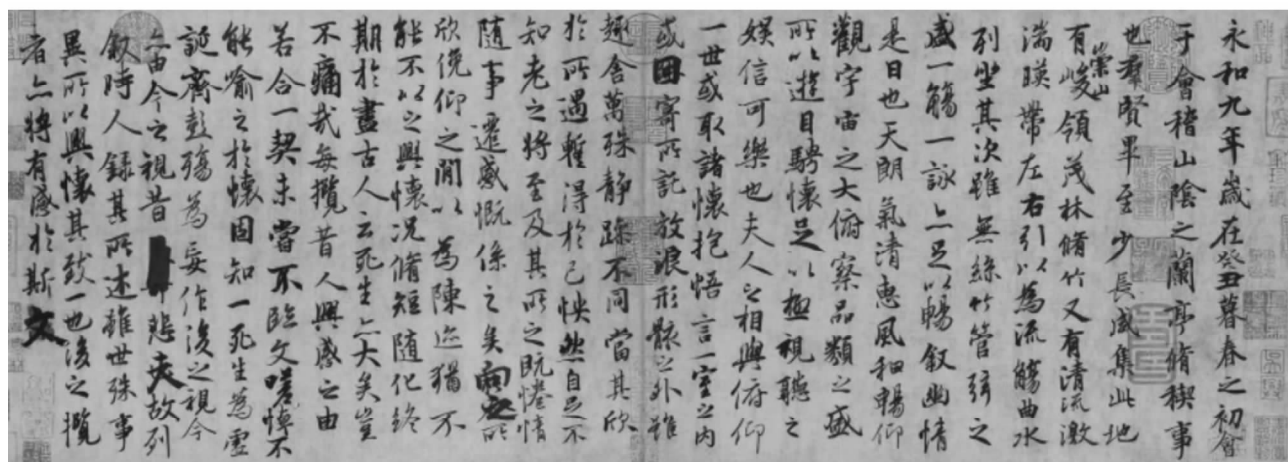


Fig. 1 Running script of the Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion (24.5 cm × 69.9 cm, painting on paper, collected in the Palace Museum)



Fig. 2 Cold Food Calligraphy Copybook of Huangzhou by Su Shi in the Northern Song Dynasty (collected in the Taipei Palace Museum)

Su Shi expressed his experiences and situation at that time in the *Cold Food Calligraphy Copybook*. The desolate weather of the Cold Food Festival made him even more moved. In this work, he used the contrast of thick, light, dry, and wet, as well as the connection between characters, to reflect the coldness and desolation of his own environment.

2 The custom of literati throughout history to record weather phenomena

Most of the literati in the past dynasties recorded the weather phenomenon, or expressed their feelings by borrowing the scenery, or the weather just matched their own state of mind, or saw the beautiful scenery to share with friends, or wrote letters to friends

roast about the weather. The weather is closely related to people's production and life, and therefore has become an important component of many literary works.

For example, Wang Xizhi's *Quick Snow and Clear Time Calligraphy Copybook* and Cai Xiang's *Summer Heat Calligraphy Copybook* are existing calligraphy works. Additionally, the *Snowy Night Visit to Dai Andao*, the *Watching Snow at the Heart of the Lake Pavilion*, the *Defying the Storm: Don't Listen to the Rustling of Leaves through the Forest*, and Chairman Mao Zedong's *Qinyuan Spring* • *Snow*, all of which contain weather elements.

Among them, the *Quick Snow and Clear Time Calligraphy Copybook* (Fig. 3) is said to be a running script work by Wang Xizhi of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, with four lines and 28 characters

in total. It is currently collected in the Taipei Palace Museum. The content of the letter is the author's greeting to family and friends with a happy mood on the first clear day of heavy snow. The *Quick Snow and Clear Time Calligraphy Copybook* and Wang Xianzhi's *Zhongqiu Calligraphy Copybook* (the existing version is verified to be copied by Mi Fu and the content is unidentifiable, so it will not be discussed in this paper), as well as Wang Xun's *Boyuan Calligraphy Copybook*, were collectively known as the "Three Xi" by Emperor Qianlong, and this calligraphy copybook ranked first^[4].

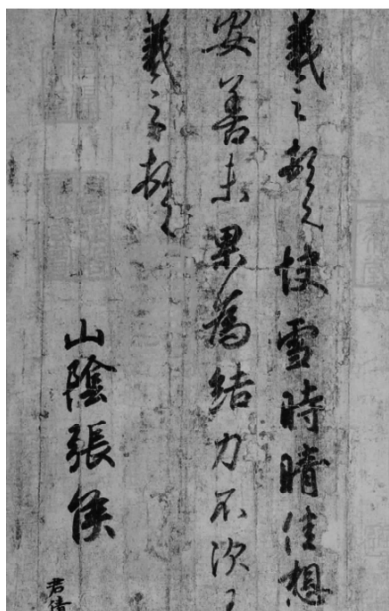


Fig. 3 The *Quick Snow and Clear Time Calligraphy Copybook* by Wang Xizhi of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (collected in the Taipei Palace Museum)

The *Summer Heat Calligraphy Copybook* is a cursive script handwritten by Cai Xiang (Fig. 4). From the content of the handwritten notes, it can be seen that Cai Xiang is quite reasonable.

"In the hot summer, there is no time to pay respects", so he did not go to other people's homes to avoid being annoyed. In the scorching summer, he, who was reasonable and understanding, couldn't help but complain and sigh. But he ultimately rose to the height of philosophy of life. Only by drinking some refined tea and giving away a few slices of refined tea to friends can it relieve the heat and experience some of the joys of life.

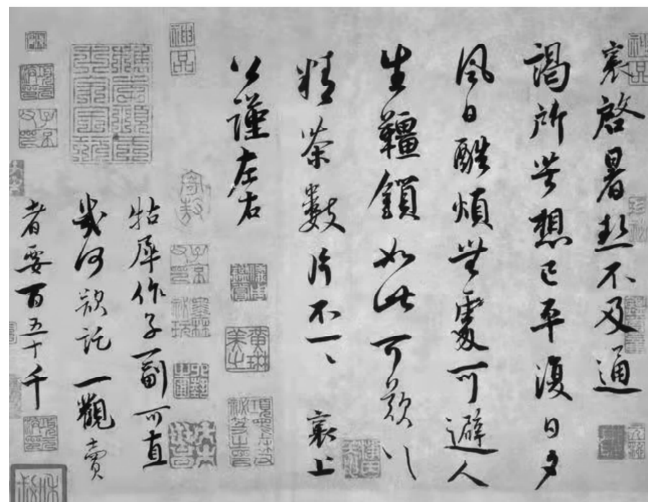


Fig. 4 The *Summer Heat Calligraphy Copybook* by Cai Xiang of the Northern Song Dynasty (23 cm × 29.2 cm, 1052, collected in the Taipei Palace Museum)

Although this calligraphy copybook is short in length, it is written in alternating regular script, with each character being a precious gem. The rules are rigorous, and the tone is simple, gentle, and beautiful. The restlessness brought by the heat has turned into a refreshing breeze through writing brush, like a refreshing tea to relieve the heat, giving people a fresh and pleasing feeling. The author's calm and open-minded character is also vividly portrayed on paper^[5].

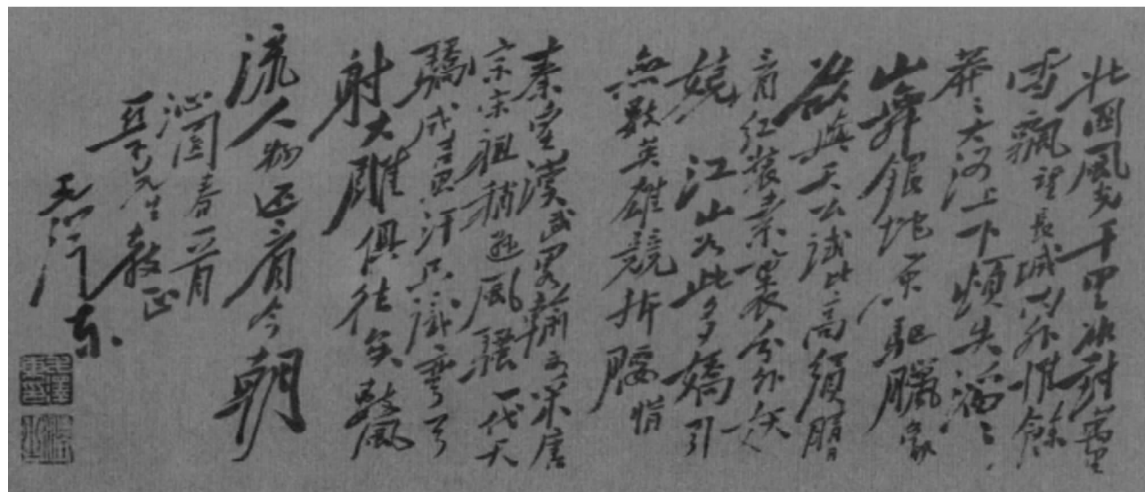


Fig. 5 The *Qinyuan Spring · Snow* gifted Liu Yazi by Mao Zedong (this is the only calligraphy work currently seen that bears two seals of Mao Zedong)

(From page 10)

On September 6, 1945, Mr. Yu Youren, a veteran of the Kuomintang and the most renowned calligrapher in China at the time, hosted a luncheon for Mao Zedong and others. During the banquet, he praised the concluding line of the poem *Qinyuan Spring · Snow*. That afternoon, Mao Zedong, along with Zhou Enlai and Wang Ruofei, visited two literary and ink friends, Liu Yazi and Zhang Boling, at Nankai Middle School in Shapingba. At that time, Mao Zedong gifted Liu Yazi with the book *Qinyuan Spring · Snow*. Mao Zedong's letter to Liu Yazi on October 7, 1945 also confirmed this statement: "when I first arrived in northern Shaanxi and saw heavy snow, I filled in a poem that seemed to be slightly similar in style to your poem, and submitted it for review"^[6].

3 Influence of weather and climate on calligraphy works

Calligraphy theorist Sun Guoting in the Tang Dynasty proposed the theory of subject – object relationship of "Five Obedience and Five Harmony" in his book *Shupu*.

"Shi He Qi Run" refers to clear skies, moist air, pleasant climate, and excellent climatic conditions are conducive to writing. "Feng Zao Ri Yan" refers to the hot wind blowing, scorching sun, and dryness of the air. Li Yangbing talked about the "Nine Life Methods" in the *Hanlin Forbidden Scripture*, which includes "nine, life scenery, clear sky, and pleasant human heart". In the Song Dynasty, Gu Junzhi also said, "when the scenery is bright and clear, it could write; when there is a hint of darkness in the sky and earth, it does need to use writing brush". Wang Xizhi's *Prologue to the Collection of Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion* is a masterpiece created in the context of "clear sky, gentle breeze, and smooth flow of time". It can be seen that the warm climate provides a good creative envi-

acteristics of different regions.

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ronment for calligraphers.

If writing is done under scorching sun and dry weather, one often feels that the writing brush is stiff and unsmooth, disturbing the writer's mood, affecting their physical and mental state, and causing them to stutter.

The Chinese people said that "man and nature are one". The four seasons of nature overlap, and the weather changes. The ancient people had already felt the impact of weather on their body and mind. What environment can the best state of writing be achieved? As Zhuangzi said in the *Great and Venerable Teacher*, people and their surroundings are as suitable, harmonious, and unified as the four seasons of nature. Heaven, earth, and human form a harmonious whole. This situation is also the best result that matches the environment and the creativity of the calligrapher. So, writing in a physiological and psychological environment that is suitable for the creative subject can achieve the best state of creation^[3].

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