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Made by the Empire: Wang Xizhi's *Xingrangtie* and Its Paradoxes

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Abstract

The essay explores the history of one of the most celebrated pieces of Chinese calligraphy, an early Tang tracing copy of *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (*Xingrangtie*) by Wang Xizhi (303–ca. 361). The Tang paper slip with its fifteen characters is merely 8.9 cm wide but embedded into a scroll of 372 cm, with seals and colophons from three Chinese emperors and an illustrious line of connoisseurs. The essay explores the numerous paradoxes in the reception of both the scroll and the Wang Xizhi persona, with the scroll exemplifying the constructed nature of Wang's persona in its dialectic relationship to Chinese imperial culture.

KEYWORDS: Chinese calligraphy, Wang Xizhi (303–ca. 361), Qianlong Emperor, Song Huizong, Dong Qichang, *Xingrangtie*, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest*, imperial culture, seals, colophons, authenticity, letters, copy

An Iconic Artifact

No Chinese calligrapher is more revered than the “sage of calligraphy” (*shusheng* 書聖) Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–ca. 361), an aristocrat whose prestigious Langye Wang 琅琊王 refugee family from Shandong helped set up the Eastern Jin dynasty at Jiankang in 317. Among other designations, Wang Xizhi held the military title “Commander-of-the-right” (*youjun* 右軍) and is known to have retired late in life (354 or 355) from high office because of a political rivalry with Wang Shu 王述 (303–368).¹ Despite his long background of political involvement, Wang Xizhi's traditional image is grounded in his Daoist interests as well as his famed *Lanting ji xu* 蘭亭集序 (Preface to the orchid pavilion collection), in which he appears to speak in a personal voice free of social or political ambition.

As noted by Eugene Wang, connoisseurs through the ages have constructed from the appreciation of his calligraphy a persona of the celebrated artistic Wang Xizhi that is complicated and contradicted in multiple ways by other sources, including his letters, anecdotes in texts such as Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403–444) *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (A new account of the tales of the world), and Wang's official biography in the *Jinshu* 晉書 (History of the Jin), written nearly three centuries after his death and graced with an encomium by Emperor Tang Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 626–649).² As a result, views and evaluations of the historical Wang Xizhi differ widely in traditional writings since the fifth century; yet in the dominant aesthetic appreciation of his “Daoist” calligraphy, attributed mostly to the late years of his

life,³ Wang appears to embody the idealized distance in relation to the imperial state that was highly prized among the early medieval Chinese intellectual elite for exemplifying moral rectitude and personal integrity. This persona is not entirely dissimilar to the equally constructed one of Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427).⁴ Coincidentally, the first known collector of Wang Xizhi's calligraphy appears to have been Huan Xuan 桓玄 (369–404), a patron of other calligraphers and painters but also of Tao.⁵

In the later imagination, shaped by Wang's self-representation as much as by the reception history of his art,⁶ his aesthetic oeuvre is characterized through this particular relation to the imperial state, that is, the dialectical stance of retreat and affirmation. Although Wang did produce formal calligraphy for public purposes,⁷ his surviving oeuvre—aside from *Lanting ji xu*—was already greatly celebrated for his private (or apparently private) letters in early Tang times.⁸ The letters, regarded as authentic expressions of their author's emotional self and praised purely for their calligraphy, were cherished by the court as much as by the learned elite of aristocrats, scholars, and affiliated officials. From this perspective, Wang's oeuvre was not created in opposition to the state but still quietly gave voice to a human existence outside officialdom. Within generations after Wang's death, however, this voice came to depend largely on the imperial court for its preservation and transmission. Thus, Wang's artistic creation and the persona it represents—as opposed to the historical Wang Xizhi who served for decades in office—stand both within and outside the Chinese state, a posture not uncommon among aristocrats of his

time; or, more precisely, they occupy a place in which the “outside” nature was itself appropriated by, and sublated within, the value system of court culture.

Under Tang Taizong, the imperial palace collection reportedly included 2,290 Wang Xizhi pieces—that is, originals and copies.⁹ During Song Huizong’s 宋徽宗 (r. 1100–1126) reign, centuries after the collapse of the Tang imperial court, more than 3,800 works by Wang Xizhi and his son Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–ca. 386) were reportedly in the imperial collection; at least 243 by the father are mentioned in Huizong’s calligraphy catalogue *Xuanhe shupu* 宣和書譜 (Xuanhe calligraphy catalogue).¹⁰ It is unclear how many (if any) of these works were originals as opposed to copies created in a range of different styles and techniques, but they vastly dominated the Tang and Song imperial collections.¹¹

Today, no original by Wang Xizhi is known to have survived. The closest we get to Wang’s handwriting is a very small number of tracing copies presumably from the seventh or eighth century.¹² The only such copy outside collections in China and Japan is held in the Princeton University Art Museum, a gift from John B. Elliott, who had purchased it shortly before 1970 in Japan.¹³ First mentioned in the ninth century, the scroll is known as *Xingrangtie* 行穰帖, a title taken from its third and fourth characters and conventionally translated as “Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest.” The fifteen characters of Wang Xizhi’s text are written on a paper slip 24.4 cm high and 8.9 cm wide; in its current mounting, the slip is embedded into a scroll 372 cm in length, bearing labels, colophons, and seals from the twelfth through the twentieth centuries.

Wang Xizhi’s text is not only very short; it is also very difficult to decipher (Fig. 1). Dong Qichang’s 董其昌 (1555–1636) transcription—now part of the scroll—differs in four characters from Zhang Yanyuan’s 張彥遠 (ninth-century) first publication of the text:¹⁴

Zhang Yanyuan: 足下行穰久人還竟應快不大都當任

Dong Qichang: 足下行穰九人還示應決不大都當佳

Neither transcription renders an easily intelligible text, and neither may be correct with regard to the final character.¹⁵ According to Zhang, the fifteen characters are only the first half of a longer letter of thirty-two characters, which he transcribes in toto; the earliest extant reproductions of the second half are found in thirteenth-century rubbings collections and then again in Dong’s catalogue *Xihong tang fatie* 戲鴻堂法帖 (Model calligraphies from the Hall of Playing Geese) of 1603.

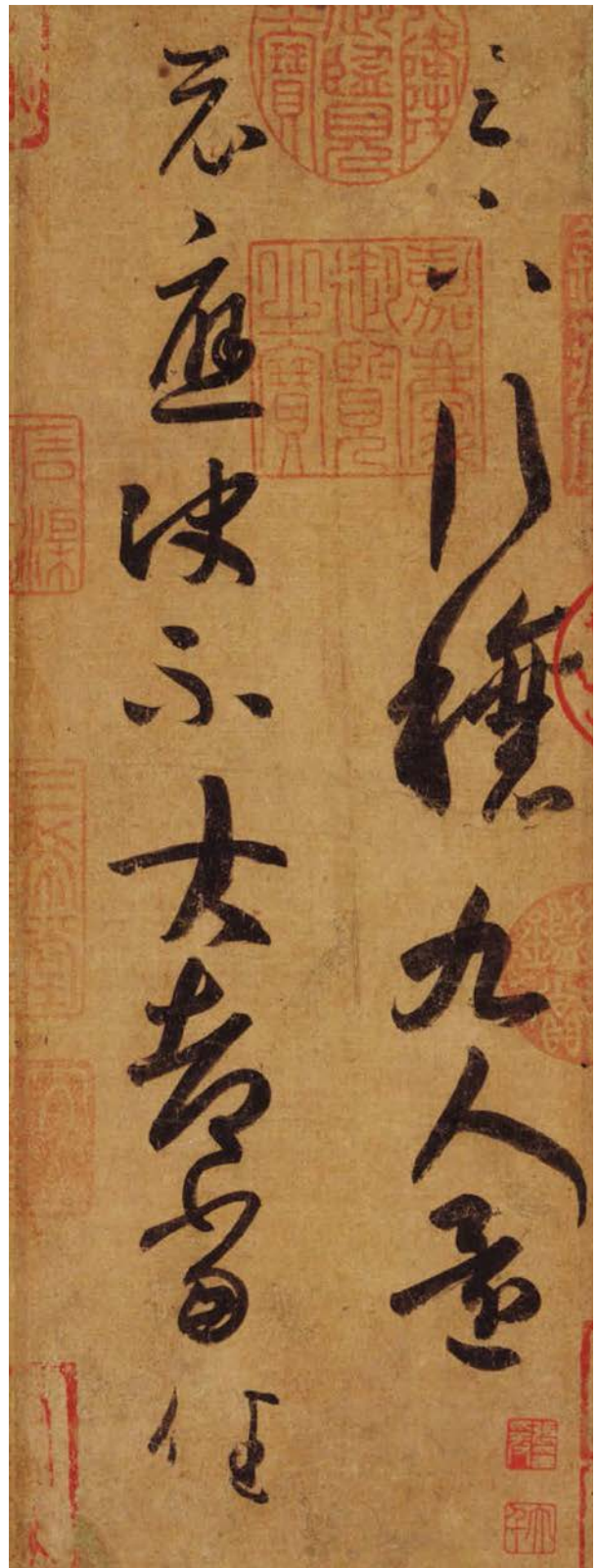


FIG. 1. Wang Xizhi (China, 303–ca. 361), *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (Xingrangtie) (detail). Tang dynasty tracing copy. Handscroll, ink on *yinghuang* paper, 24.4 × 8.9 cm. Complete scroll: ink on paper and silk, 30 × 372 cm. Princeton University Art Museum, Bequest of John B. Elliott, Class of 1951. Photography: Bruce M. White.

Unfortunately, the second half of the letter includes two undecipherable characters Zhang could not transcribe, and the two halves differ clearly in their calligraphy, which may or may not be due to liberties taken in copying (Fig. 2).¹⁶ As both are copies, we cannot decide whether both (or either) represent Wang Xizhi's hand, nor is it certain—despite Zhang's claim—that they indeed belong together. Leaving the second half of Zhang's text aside, Dong Qichang's version may be parsed and translated as follows,¹⁷

足下行穰。九人還。示應決不。大都當佳。
 You, Sir, had a sacrifice performed to ward off bad harvest. Nine people returned [to you] to report whether [the spirits'] response was decisive or not. [I presume] altogether things should be fine.

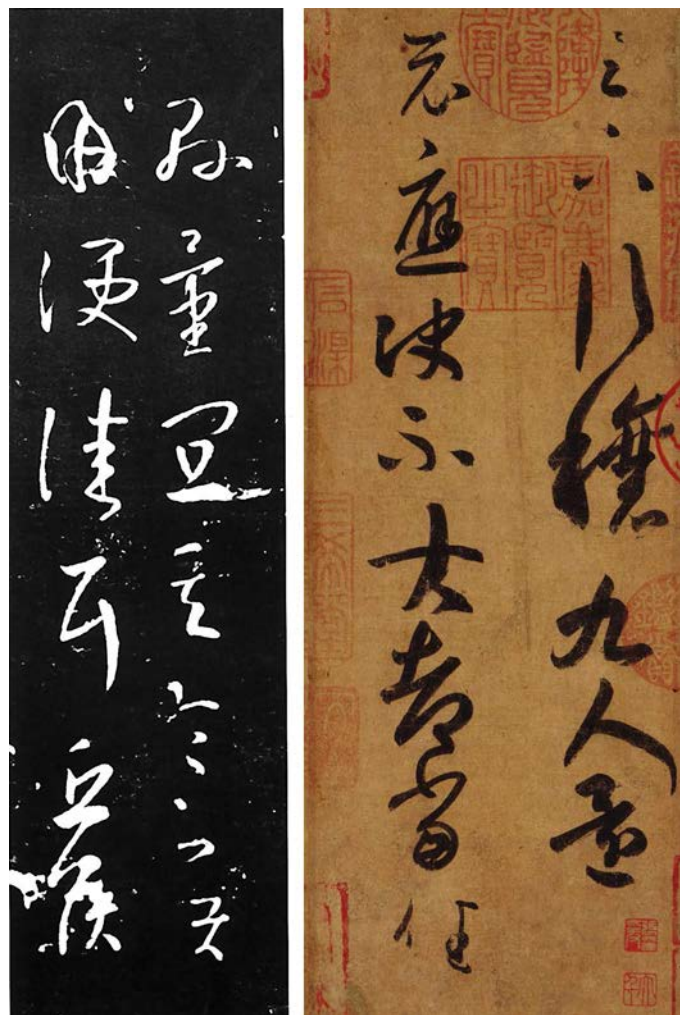


FIG. 2. The two halves of the letter. Left: Wang Xizhi (attributed), rubbing from *Model calligraphies from the Hall of Playing Geese* (Xihong tang fatie, 1603), part 16. Right: Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (*Xingrangtie*) (detail).

This is one plausible translation of a possibly incomplete text that has significant variants in its earlier transcription. We do not know whether or not the variants noted above are merely different interpretations of the same characters or the reflection of a copyist's mistakes or deliberate changes.¹⁸ Moreover, Zhang Yanyuan's version would not only be twice as long but also, because of the content of the second half, would be parsed and interpreted very differently. Here, the letter would not concern some sacrificial ritual but rather the question of whether or not someone (who is not named) might be suitable for, and should be appointed to, an official position. Nobody can decide which version to follow—nor has this fundamental ambiguity ever disturbed the long connoisseurial tradition. Whatever the case, the meaning of *Xingrangtie* appears quotidian: a terse communication with someone anonymous, largely descriptive and including—in my interpretation above—a brief flash of personal concern at the end.

To summarize, *Xingrangtie* is a trivial, partly unintelligible, tiny paper slip of fifteen characters of unknown provenance that is either the copy of a fragment or the fragment of a copy. Its known history begins only with Huizong's seals from the early twelfth century—some eight centuries after Wang Xizhi's death—followed by another gap of five centuries until the late Ming. And yet, judging from the various book covers it graces, *Xingrangtie*—aside from the celebrated *Lanting ji xu*, which also exists only in copy—is often taken to represent some of the finest elements of the Chinese calligraphic tradition altogether.¹⁹ Why, and how, would such a tiny, obscure, and seemingly insignificant artifact, compromised in multiple ways and yet always preserved and protected through the ages, rise to such iconic stature?

The Sequential Order of the Princeton Scroll

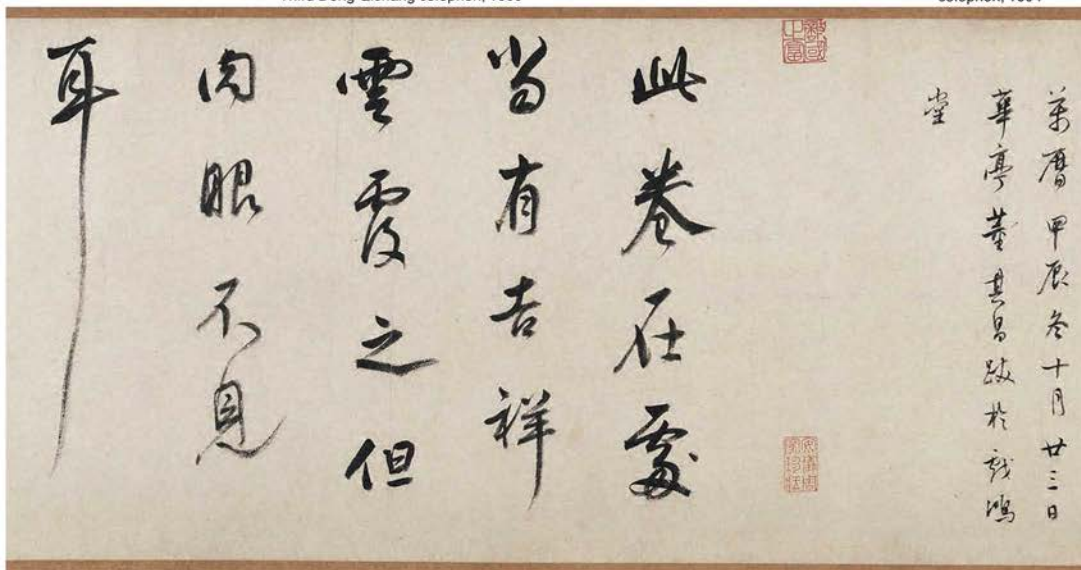
In addition to Wang Xizhi's fifteen characters, the scroll contains three labels (by Huizong, the Qianlong 乾隆 Emperor, and Dong), one transcription of Wang's text (by Dong), and eight colophons (three by Dong, one by Sun Chengze 孫承澤 [1592–1676], three by Qianlong, and one by Zhang Daqian 張大千 [1899–1983]). In addition, the outside of the scroll contains the label "Yuti Jin Wang youjun Xingrangtie" 御題晉王右軍行穰帖 (Imperially titled *Xingrangtie* by the Jin dynasty Commander-of-the-right, Wang), possibly added under the Jiaqing 嘉慶 Emperor (r. 1796–1820) who also left a seal inside the scroll. In its current mounting, done at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art in the



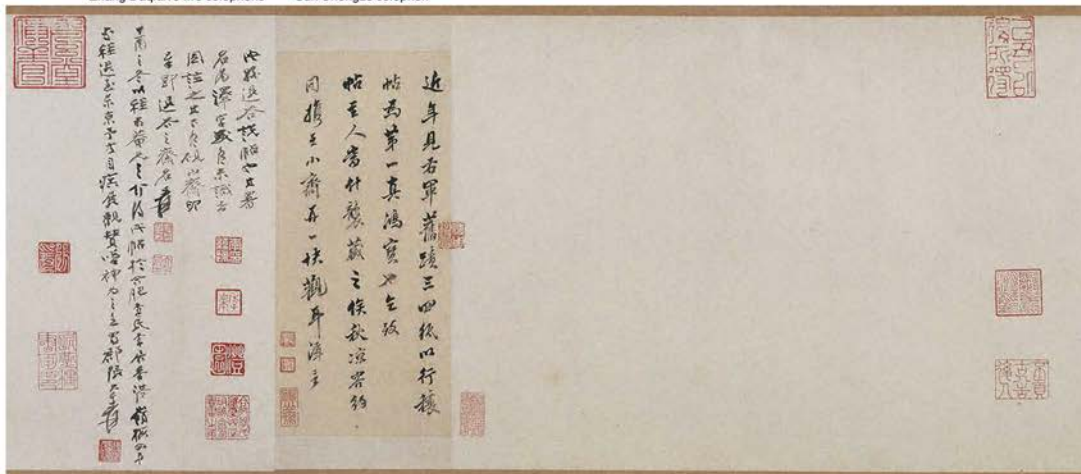
Section 7

Section 6

Section 5



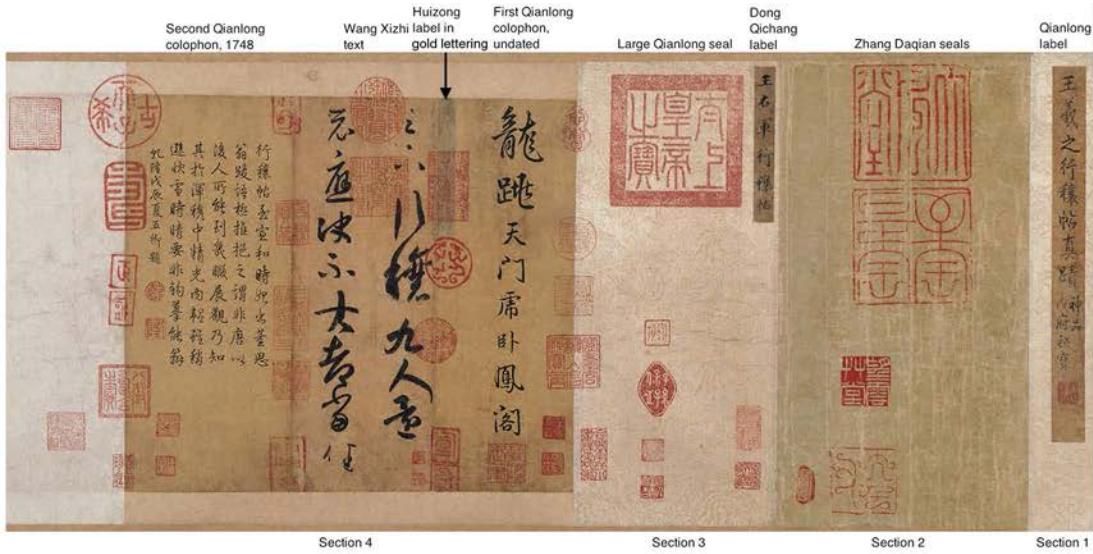
Section 7, continued



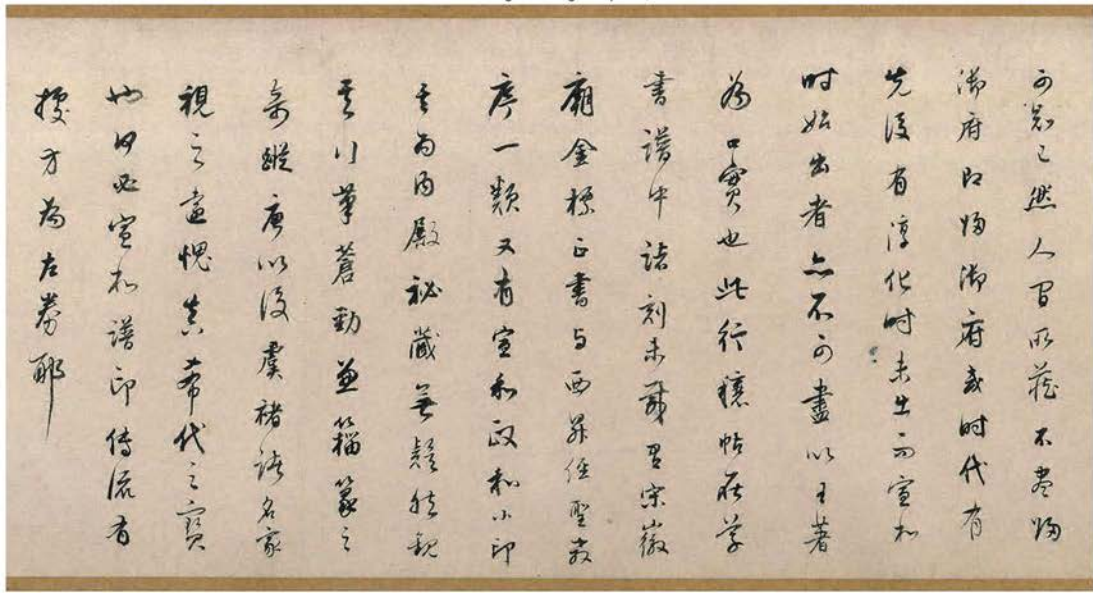
Section 9

Section 8

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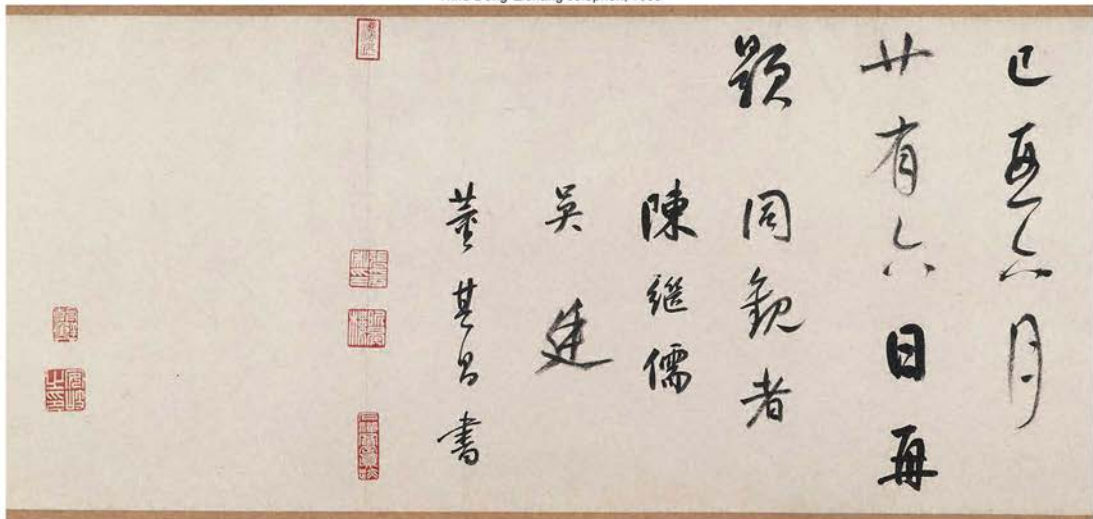


Section 4 Section 3 Section 2 Section 1
Second Dong Qichang colophon, 1604



Section 7, continued

Third Dong Qichang colophon, 1609



Section 7, continued

FIG. 3. Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (Xingrangtie). Tang dynasty tracing copy. Handscroll, ink on paper and silk, 30×372 cm. Princeton University Art Museum, Bequest of John B. Elliott, Class of 1951. Photography: Bruce M. White.

1980s, the scroll has nine sections from right to left (Fig. 3):²⁰

1. A paper slip mounted on silk, bearing the label from Qianlong's court: "Wang Xizhi Xingrangtie zhenji" 王羲之行穰帖真蹟 (Genuine traces of Wang Xizhi's *Xingrangtie*), written in eight large characters and followed immediately below by two columns of the altogether six smaller characters *shenpin* 神品/*neifu mibao* 內府秘寶 (divine grade/closed-off treasure of the Palace Treasury), indicating that the scroll was of the highest grade and kept in the imperial palace. Below is a small imperial seal.²¹
2. A separate sheet of silk with four seals by Zhang Daqian, who acquired the scroll in 1957 in Hong Kong and remounted it; the fifth seal is by Zhang's wife.
3. Another sheet of silk with a second narrow label by Dong: "Wang youjun Xingrangtie" 王右軍行穰帖 (*Xingrangtie* by the Commander-of-the-right, Wang); to its left is a large seal by Qianlong and below both are several smaller collectors' seals.
4. The centerpiece of the scroll: Wang Xizhi's fifteen characters on yellow paper, presumably Tang *yinghuang* 硬黃 (hardened yellow) paper,²² flanked by two pieces of similarly dark paper inscribed with two colophons by Qianlong and densely covered with seals; the colophon on the left is dated 1748. Barely visible on the seam between the Tang paper and the dark paper to its right, Huizong's label of faint gold characters, written on a slip of paper "a dull silver in color,"²³ is spliced in at the top: "Wang Xizhi xingrangtie" 王羲之行穰帖 (Wang Xizhi's *Xingrangtie*).
5. On white Song paper, Huizong's large palace seal, followed by another Qianlong colophon also dated 1748; thereafter, still on the same paper, Dong's single line of transcription.
6. A narrow sheet of silk with Dong's first (undated) colophon.
7. Dong's second and third colophons on paper, dated 1604 and 1609.
8. Largely empty paper with Sun Chengze's colophon on darker paper at the end.
9. On paper, two colophons by Zhang Daqian, accompanied by five seals (of their thirty-four on the scroll) by Zhang and his wife, with another five seals by Li Jingmai 李經邁 (1876–1940) and

his family, who had sold the scroll to Zhang in 1957.²⁴

Sections 1, 2, and 9 have no seals across their seams; Sections 3 to 8 are all connected by seals on their seams. This shows that Zhang's (and any subsequent) remounting affected only the beginning and the end of the scroll.

Colophons and Seals

The seals reveal the scroll's format at various stages of its history. The spatial sequence of texts does not represent chronology: first, Qianlong and Dong's labels in Sections 1 and 3 come from later remountings, when they were moved from the outside to the inside of the scroll; second, Qianlong inscribed his colophons into the empty space created by Huizong more than five centuries earlier; third, Zhang's seals at the beginning and his colophons and seals at the end represent the final collector traces.

Seals and colophons were important for authenticating works, but they were not inviolable; they could be cut off, displaced, or even moved from one work to another, as Mi Fu 米芾 (1052–1107) has already noted for various Wang Xizhi pieces. An ignorant mounter could deprive a scroll of its historical significance, while a cunning one could create forgeries.²⁵ Because of its complete lack of originals, some scholars consider the entire Wang Xizhi oeuvre a Tang invention.²⁶

The routine flexibility with which the individual parts of a scroll were rearranged by remounting, copying, and reproduction in wood or stone carvings can be gleaned from the seals, labels, and spacing of characters found in two *Xingrangtie* rubbings (Fig. 4): one from Wu Ting's 吳廷 (fl. ca. 1575–1625) *Yuqing zhai fatie* 餘清齋法帖 (Model calligraphies from the Yuqing Studio; 1614), the other from Qianlong's *Sanxi tang fatie* 三希堂法帖 (Model calligraphies from the Three Rarities Hall; 1747–1750).²⁷ Both rearrange the seals as well as the labels, though the rubbing from Qianlong's catalogue diverges most dramatically from the scroll—which by 1748, at the latest, was also owned by him.²⁸ These rubbings advertise only the presence of certain seals and labels, not their actual placement on the scroll. On *Xingrangtie*, Qianlong's writing immediately left and right of Wang Xizhi's calligraphy created an individual bond between the earlier "calligraphy sage" and the latter-day Manchu emperor, whereas Qianlong's imperial collection of stone engravings, complete with Dong's label and Huizong's seal yet *without* Qianlong's own traces, depersonalized the scroll, marking it as an artifact of imperial and not personal representation. The

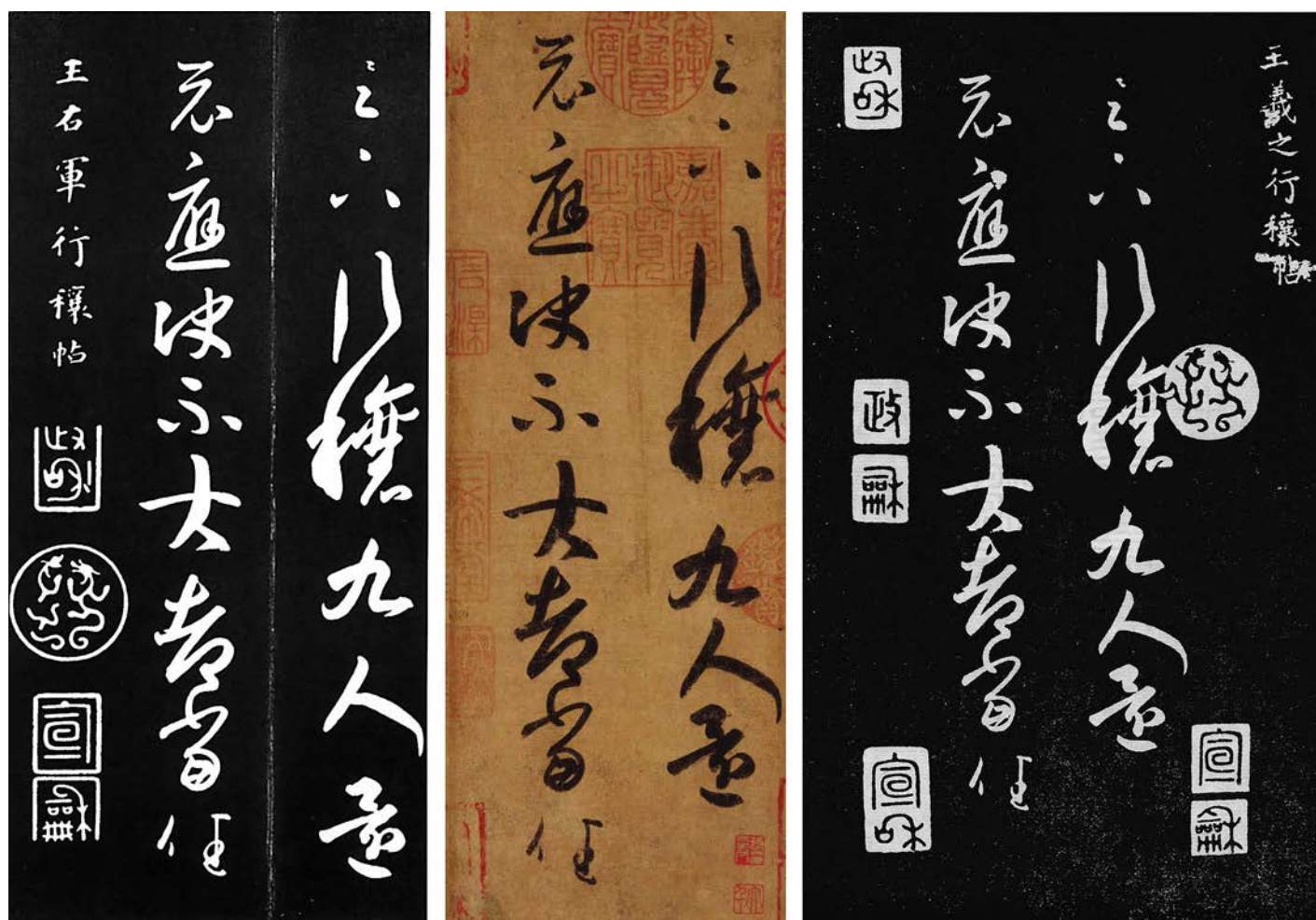


FIG. 4. The Qianlong and Wu Ting rubbings. Left: rubbing from *Model calligraphies from the Three Rarities Hall* (Sanxi tang fatie), 1747–50. After Robert E. Harrist Jr., “A Letter from Wang Hsi-chih and the Culture of Chinese Calligraphy,” in *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection*, ed. Robert E. Harrist Jr. and Wen C. Fong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 1999), 255. Right: rubbing from *Model calligraphies from the Yuqing Studio* (Yuqing zhai fatie), 1614. After *Yuqing zhai fatie* 餘清齋法帖 (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2003).

Xingrangtie scroll and its reproduction in the “Three Rarities” collection of rubbings thus represent “the king’s two bodies”—the personal “body natural” (with the scroll) and the institutional “body politic” (with the rubbing)—analyzed in Kantorowicz’s classic study of medieval European sovereignty.²⁹

A few decades after Wang Xizhi’s death, the authenticity of the many works attributed to him was already in doubt.³⁰ We must consider the centerpiece of *Xingrangtie*—Wang’s fifteen characters flanked by Qianlong’s colophons, and all three texts surrounded by more than thirty seals—against these anxieties. Each seal signals ownership or appreciation, but many do more: they authenticate the scroll and, placed on the seams between the different physical parts, ensure its integrity as a whole. The seals are the guardians of the cultural tradition

created around Wang Xizhi’s words. For *Xingrangtie*, this still-visible tradition—its history of transmission through the ages—begins only in the twelfth century, with the earliest seals of Emperor Huizong. Whatever history transpired before that, presumably beginning with a copyist in the early Tang and possibly authenticated by seals from the seventh or eighth century onward, was cut off and erased before the scroll entered the Song court. Huizong’s *Xingrangtie* was already a fragment, whether or not it was originally less than half of the larger text recorded by Zhang Yanyuan.

Song Huizong’s Scroll

No later than under Huizong, the Tang paper with Wang Xizhi’s characters was flanked with dark empty

paper left and right, and the entire work, now nearly square, was mounted onto a silk backing. This paper could have been specially colored or harvested from an older source, possibly also Tang. Farther left, a brighter sheet of paper bears Huizong's large palace seal. This large seal is part of the "Xuanhe program" identified by Barnhart and elaborated on by Ebrey, as is Huizong's label in gold characters and the round double-dragon seal below it (Fig. 5).

The scroll contains six Huizong seals representing, together with the label, the nearly complete "Xuanhe program" (aside from a missing gourd-shaped seal on the right, discussed below) in its fixed spatial arrangement: the large square "Neifu tushu zhi yin" 內府圖書之印 (Seal of paintings and calligraphies of the Palace Treasury) on the bright paper to the left; the round double-dragon seal on the seam between the Tang paper and the dark paper to its right; and four rectangular seals denoting the Zhenghe 政和 (r. 1111–1117) and Xuanhe 宣和 (r. 1119–1125) reign periods on the seams around Wang Xizhi's calligraphy and on the seam between the dark paper to its left and the bright paper farther left, securing the scroll in its new arrangement under imperial authority. No further Northern Song seal is seen on the

outer seam of the dark paper on the right. The "Xuanhe program" of title slip and seals was not a personal way of bringing the imperial presence to the scroll. It was an institutional arrangement; it secured Wang's calligraphy in its scroll, but also, most important, canonized the scroll's place in the imperial collection of works of the highest order, as noted explicitly by Huizong's son and successor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1130).³¹

This reconstruction of the Huizong scroll has some problems. First, the paper bearing Wang Xizhi's text is cropped extremely close to the characters, especially on the right. Closer inspection of Huizong's round double-dragon seal and of his square seals on the seams reveals some remounting and paper cutting after the dragon seal had been placed; the cut runs directly through it (Fig. 6). Furthermore, the dark paper to the left of Wang Xizhi's writing is significantly wider (10.3 cm) than the paper to the right (8.5 cm), suggesting that the latter has been cropped on its right side. This cut may have eliminated another sheet of bright Song paper similar to the one on the left, the seam of which then might have carried another Huizong seal, the gourd-shaped "yushu" 御書 (imperially written) seal known from other scrolls.³²



FIG. 5. Song Huizong's label and seals. Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (Xingrangtie) (detail).



FIG. 6. Song Huizong's double-dragon seal. Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (*Xingrangtie*) (detail).

The scroll was also cropped vertically. The three rectangular reign period seals in the upper and lower corners of the Tang paper sheet are cut off and no longer extend onto the new backing of the scroll. Since two of Qianlong's seals cross over the upper border of the Tang paper, the cuts must have been made no later than during his reign, possibly during remounting, perhaps after the scroll had been damaged. In the rubbing of Wu Ting's *Yuqing zhai fatie* (1614), the seals seem still complete.

Huizong did not leave a colophon anywhere near Wang's text; the dark paper on both sides of Wang's characters was left entirely empty. Moreover, except for the large palace seal far removed to the left, Huizong's seals did not dominate the scroll, even though the round double-dragon seal on the right slightly touches the character *rang* 穰. Wang Xizhi's calligraphy had a pristine presence all its own, capaciously arranged. According to Ebrey, this reflects a change in Huizong's style sometime after 1107, when he decided to minimize his intrusion into the space of the artwork proper save for inserting a title slip by his own hand (Fig. 7).³³

The Qianlong Emperor's Scroll

Consider, by contrast, Qianlong's scroll: in addition to the label (probably placed on the outside of the scroll), three colophons and nineteen seals appear closely around Wang Xizhi's text. As is attested in numerous other examples of Chinese painting and calligraphy, Qianlong was rarely shy about such impositions of imperial graffiti.³⁴ In the case of *Xingrangtie*, the emperor's crowded colophons and seals reframe the Wang Xizhi text as an artifact that disappears into the Manchu emperor's self-representation. With Qianlong, the scroll turned into an entirely different object, making it almost impossible to imagine the serene spaciousness it had once possessed.

Qianlong's scroll had been owned and remounted by the Chinese salt merchant and art collector of Korean descent, An Qi 安岐 (1683–ca. 1744). It was still in his possession in 1744,³⁵ four years before Qianlong's colophons of 1748. An Qi's eleven seals range from the right-hand seam of Huizong's dark paper toward Section 8 of the scroll, where the paper with Sun Chengze's colophon is attached. When An Qi placed his seal onto the upper right corner of Huizong's dark paper (Fig. 8), that paper was already cut to its present size, and the bright Song paper that presumably had existed to its right was already removed. Nearly the entire scroll as we know it—perhaps except for Sections 1, 2, and 9—was available to Qianlong in 1748, when he “was just beginning to learn the art of connoisseurship.”³⁶ The emperor, however, limited his seals and colophons to the small area that had been part of Huizong's scroll and, in addition—with his largest seal—to the silk backing to the immediate right of Huizong's dark paper. The heaviest traces of Qianlong's appropriation are the massive seal on the upper right, three colophons—two of which on the hitherto empty dark paper flanking Wang Xizhi's characters—and a flurry of eighteen seals in and around Wang's calligraphy, many of them across the four vertical seams of the Tang paper and Huizong's dark paper sheets flanking it. One large rectangular seal is even impressed squarely on Huizong's faint label, nearly obliterating it (Fig. 9).³⁷

What are Qianlong's colophons about? The single line to the right of Wang Xizhi's text begins with two large characters and then, as if in an abrupt realization of the limited space, continues with six smaller ones. Its text, 龍跳天門，虎卧鳳閣 (a dragon leaping at Heaven's Gate, a tiger crouching beneath Phoenix Pavilion), quotes the Liang emperor Wu's 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) earlier praise of Wang Xizhi's calligraphy (Fig. 10).³⁸ Although in Qianlong's calligraphy this line appears almost casual in the uneven size of its characters and



FIG. 7. Song Huizong's scroll reconstructed. Based on Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (Xingrangtie) (detail).



FIG. 8. An Qi's seals. Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (Xingrangtie) (detail).

slight leftward slant, it is anything but: in nearly identical form, distinguishable only through very close comparison of individual strokes, the same line appears on at least four other works attributed to Wang Xizhi.³⁹ The differences are so slight that Qianlong's line appears to be an extremely carefully executed copy—as does Wang Xizhi's original text—or is the original from which the other instances are copied (Fig. 11).

In other words, the emperor's first colophon, citing the words of another emperor more than a millennium

earlier, was part of Qianlong's formal program (in this sense similar to Huizong's "Xuanhe program") by which he identified, distinguished, and canonized Wang Xizhi's finest works available to him. One may wonder whether the actual line on the *Xingrangtie* scroll was indeed executed by the emperor himself or rather copied by an anonymous court calligrapher.

Qianlong's colophon, dated 1748 and placed directly to the left of Wang's two lines, refers to Dong Qichang as having claimed that *Xingrangtie* is by Wang

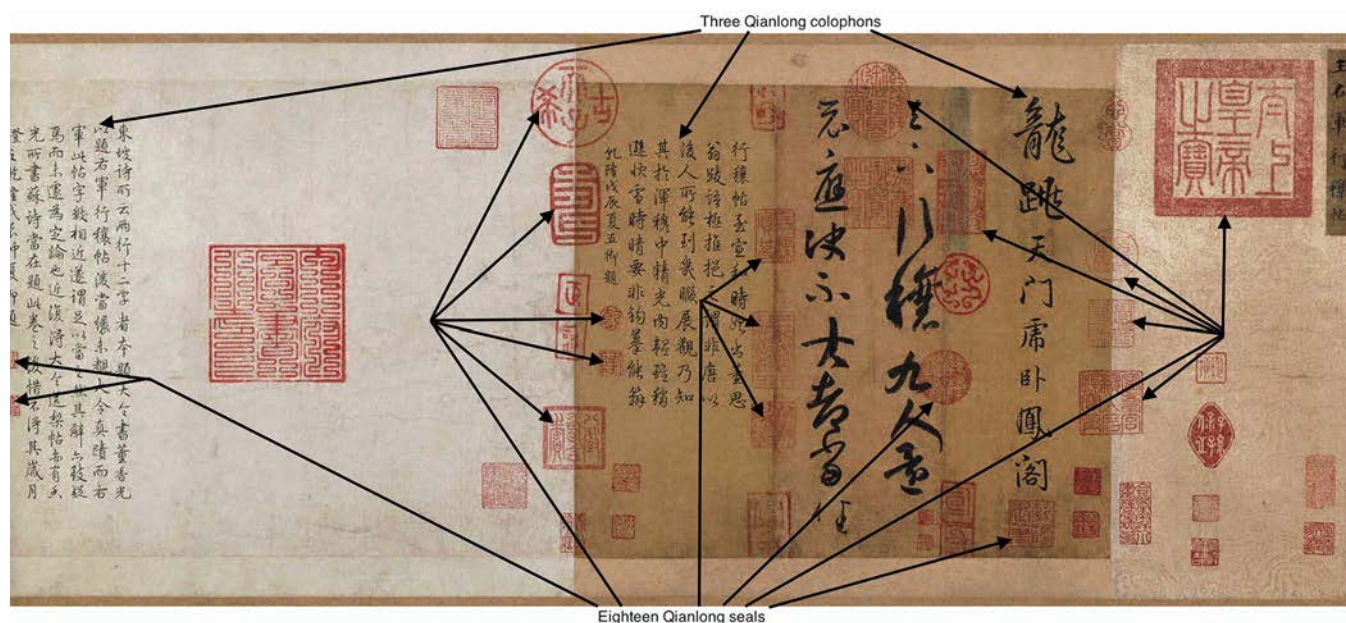


FIG. 9. Qianlong's seals and colophons. Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (*Xingrangtie*) (detail).

Xizhi's own hand, "not what people since the Tang could accomplish" (非唐以後人所能到); and then, to affirm this conclusion once again, Qianlong declares that "this is certainly not what a tracing copy can do" (要非鈎摹能辦). This echoes nearly verbatim the statement by Wang You dun 汪由敦 (1692–1758), one of the compilers of Qianlong's *Three Rarities Hall* catalogue, that "its brilliance flies forward, and its ancient air is profound and solemn; this is not what a tracing copy is capable of doing" (精采飛動而古色淵穆, 非鈎撫可辦).⁴⁰ Dong's 1609 colophon, written in imitation of Wang Xizhi's own dramatic style, notes (Fig. 12),

Wherever this scroll is, there should be an auspicious cloud covering it. It is only that the human eye cannot see it! Inscribed again on the 26th day of the sixth month in the year *jiyou*, when viewing [the scroll] together with Chen Jiru and Wu Ting. Written by Dong Qichang.

此卷在處, 當有吉祥雲覆之, 但肉眼不見耳。己酉六月廿六日再題, 同觀者陳繼儒、吳廷。董其昌書。

In his undated colophon mounted left of his transcription of Wang Xizhi's text, Dong also alludes to a poem by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) that praises a similarly brief text by Wang as being worth "thirty thousand" other scrolls. Qianlong's third colophon (1748) is devoted to correcting Dong's remark (which he misunderstands), trying to present himself as the superior connoisseur and scholar.⁴¹

Qianlong agrees with Dong in one crucial point: in Dong's colophon dated 1604, as well as in a separate colophon (dated 1613) on a painting by Li Tang 李唐 (ca. 1050–ca. 1130), he declares *Xingrangtie* to be Wang Xizhi's "genuine traces" (*zhenji* 真蹟), by which he means an original from his hand.⁴² This is what Qianlong asserted both in his above-quoted colophon and, moreover, in his label 王羲之行穰帖真蹟 (Genuine traces of Wang Xizhi's *Xingrangtie*) at the very beginning of the scroll. In vouching for the scroll's authenticity, Dong Qichang, Wang Youdong, and Qianlong all chose to ignore the judgment of another famous late Ming calligrapher, collector, and scholar, Zhan Jingfeng 詹景鳳, who in 1591 had pronounced the scroll a Tang tracing copy (a verdict emphatically echoed by Zhang Chou 張丑, writing in 1616). Even An Qi took it as a Tang copy.⁴³ By contrast, the attempts to affirm Wang Xizhi's own handwriting reveal the anxiety over authenticity that for centuries had haunted Wang Xizhi's works.

Letters and Persona

To the Wang Xizhi tradition, personal letters such as *Xingrangtie* are central. *Xingrangtie* has no historical anchor beyond its attribution to Wang Xizhi. Aside from *Lanting ji xu*—its original purportedly buried with Tang Taizong—such letters are the core of Wang's oeuvre, and they have been celebrated as such since at least the early Tang. Yet *Xingrangtie* has been difficult to decipher not only for "outside" audiences of later



FIG. 10. Qianlong's first colophon. Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (Xingrangtie) (detail).

(including modern) readers; from the beginning it was composed in a kind of Barthian “idiolect”⁴⁴ that presupposes much on the side of its addressee. The text's informational value is extremely low, resembling texts used in ritual exchanges where, in the words of the linguist Wade Wheelock, “practically every utterance . . . is superfluous from the perspective of ordinary con-



FIG. 11. Qianlong's first colophon in four other scrolls. From left to right: *Timely sunny after snow* (Kuaixue shiqingtie), after *Jin Wang Xizhi moji* 晉王羲之墨跡 (Ink traces of Wang Xizhi from the Jin dynasty) (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 2010), 5, 17; *Seventh month and In the capital, two calligraphies* (Qiyue duxia ertie), after *Jin Wang Xizhi moji*, 39–40; *Sightseeing* (Youmutie), after *Wang Xizhi shufa ji* 王羲之書法集 (Wang Xizhi's collected calligraphy) (Beijing: Beijing gongyi meishu chubanshe, 2005), 204–5; *Zhong Yao's thousand-character essay* (Zhongyao qianziwen), after *Wang Xizhi shufa ji*, 432–33.

versational principles.”⁴⁵ It is, in other words, “communication without information.”⁴⁶ Moreover, while Wang Xizhi's letter calligraphy is celebrated for its unrestrained spontaneity and its expression of the author's individuality, the letters are replete with the clichés and formal requirements prescribed in widely circulating epistolary manuals.⁴⁷ Such manuals began to emerge in Wang Xizhi's time and multiplied thereafter; Wang himself reportedly authored one.⁴⁸ Antje Richter has aptly summarized the interpretative problems of Wang's letters in general, and her conclusions apply fully to *Xingrangtie*:

The most obvious problem concerns the communicative efficacy of these letters that seem to be defective in so many ways. Not only do we find empty and incomplete letter frames, but the frames themselves consist mainly of epistolary conventions and stereotypes. The same can be said of many actual letter bodies, whose messages rarely go beyond the trivial chit-chat that usually—and for the most part fortunately—sinks into historical oblivion. . . . Still, as many of these letters succeed

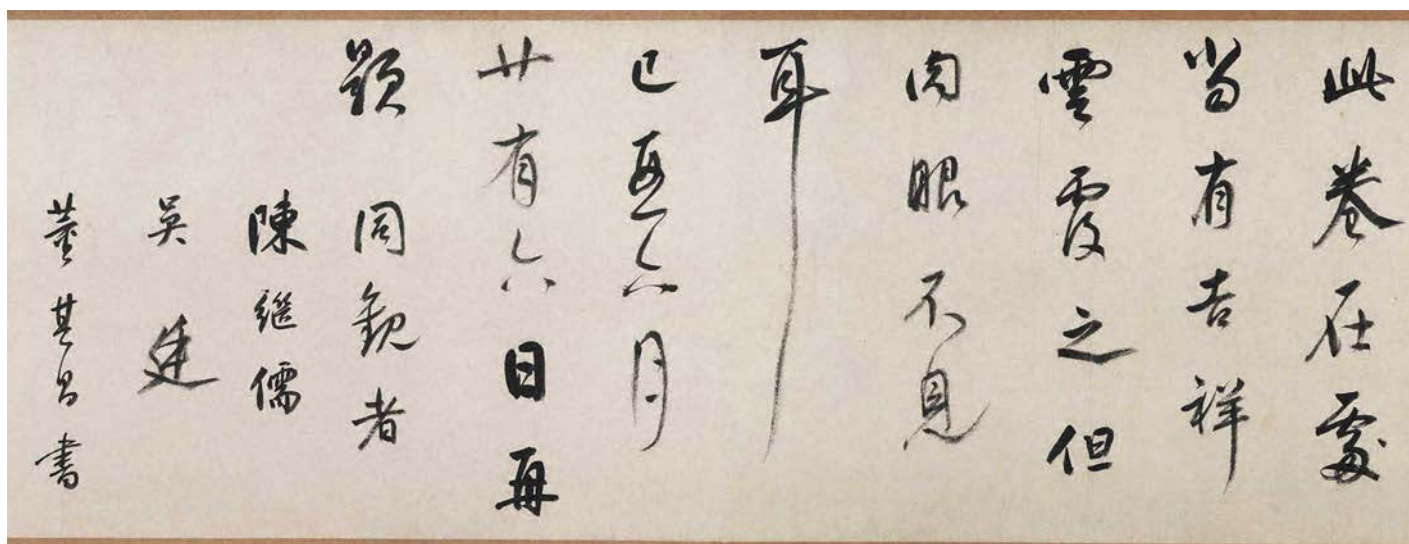


FIG. 12. Dong Qichang's 1609 colophon. Wang Xizhi, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest* (*Xingrangtie*) (detail).

in moving readers even today, they may have played an important role in maintaining friendships and family connections after all.⁴⁹

Note that Richter speaks of the lack of informative function in letters that are calligraphically fully intelligible; with *Xingrangtie*, even this minimal condition for understanding cannot be taken for granted. Either way, whatever such a letter conveys is less individual than communal and formulaic—in fact, its very purpose is “to refer to itself and to its own communicative function independently of any propositional content it may express.”⁵⁰ Wang Xizhi's uniqueness is not found in his skillful manipulation of existing formulaic phrases but instead in the uninhibited calligraphy of his letters.⁵¹ Aside from a small number of more substantial letters of which we do not have calligraphic versions, the Wang Xizhi persona can be grasped solely in the flow of his brush.

Eugene Wang has discussed a tracing copy of a Wang Xizhi letter known as *Sangluantie* 喪亂帖 (Letter on bereavement and disorder) that has quietly survived in Japan, isolated from the remaining Wang Xizhi oeuvre, for over a millennium. This text of more than a hundred characters “is an unrestrained outpouring of anguish and pathos, and these feelings appear to be echoed in the style of the calligraphy.”⁵² “Anguish and pathos” stand against the tradition's basic assumptions about Wang's calligraphy and the artist's serene and tranquil persona reconstructed from it. In Eugene Wang's reading, inspired by an earlier study by Han Yutao 韓玉濤, the letter suggests that “the real Wang Xizhi” remains elusive

and hidden behind “the Wang Xizhi tradition” that was first codified in the early Tang.⁵³

A problem remains, however: just as *Lanting ji xu* does not give us the real person, neither does *Sangluantie*, which, like so many of Wang Xizhi's letters, is composed in a highly formulaic idiom.⁵⁴ In their seemingly direct outflow of emotion—serene or anguished—both are equally mediated and rhetorical, as Qianshen Bai has demonstrated in a compelling analysis that questions the entire conceptualization of Chinese calligraphy as being expressive of the writer's inner self.⁵⁵ Since the Tang, this expressive notion of calligraphy—obviously modelled on earlier discourses on music and poetry—has often been cited with conviction, but it cannot be projected back onto Wang Xizhi, nor can it explain the widely practiced performance of calligraphy, continued through late imperial China, in social exchanges. *Sangluantie* strikes us for its seeming match of form and content, just as *Lanting ji xu* does; but this apparent fusion of text and script remains open to interpretation and, moreover, is nowhere the rule in the social practice of letter calligraphy.

The notion of calligraphy as an unmediated expression of its author's emotion was formulated no later than the early Tang, when calligrapher and critic Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (ca. 648–ca. 701) applied it to Wang Xizhi's compositions.⁵⁶ A hundred years after Sun, such expressivity was in particular associated with the seemingly untrammelled “running” (*xingshu* 行書) and “cursive” (*caoshu* 草書) styles that dominated the body of Wang's writings and were canonized in the imperial collections of the time.⁵⁷ Moreover, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修

(1007–1072), the most prolific Northern Song collector and connoisseur of ancient calligraphy, attributed the expression of unrestrained emotion specifically to the calligraphic genre of short letters.⁵⁸ Exalting the informal and personal qualities of Wang Xianzhi's writing, Ouyang related his own literary ideals to those of the ancient calligraphers. Ouyang's self-compiled literary collection contains writings in several genres of informal prose, including, most numerous, fifty-four letters. According to Ronald Egan, "No earlier writer had used prose for subjective expression so often. No earlier writer consistently allowed so much personal sentiment into prose."⁵⁹

Although Ouyang Xiu, writing just a generation before Emperor Huizong and being the leading "ancient-style literature" (*guwen* 古文) proponent of his time, and Wang Xizhi, the practitioner of Daoist rituals and copyist of Daoist scriptures, were separated not only by centuries but also philosophically, Ouyang's insistence on writing as a means of personal expression connected him to the Jin calligraphic masters. On the assumption that excellence in calligraphy should be taken to reflect moral superiority, Ouyang particularly praised the calligraphy of upright Tang officials (foremost among them Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 [709–785]).⁶⁰ Yet by the same token, Northern Song political and cultural *guwen* philosophy was still compatible with Jin dynasty philosophical and aesthetic thought through their common emphasis on personal authenticity and "natural" style; in general, "guwen scholars emphasized qualities they discerned in the calligraphy that could be traced back to the personality of the calligrapher."⁶¹ This notion of calligraphy as mirror, conceptualized as an aesthetic and ethical ideal since the late Six Dynasties and enshrined in the imperial calligraphy collections ever since, had gained strong confirmation in the decades before Huizong's reign.

Given the well-documented emphasis on genealogy in Buddhism, Daoism, and also—especially since Tang times—*guwen*-Confucianism,⁶² it is not surprising that the Chinese calligraphic tradition is based on a genealogy of individual masters⁶³ with Wang Xizhi as, paradoxically, their fountainhead and also early zenith, and that the Tang court "appointed as court calligraphers men who saw themselves in a direct line of transmission from the Wangs."⁶⁴ Yet it is not a genealogy of actual authors: the artistic persona of Wang Xizhi is the product of his works, not their origin. Here the notion of the "personal letter" turns paradoxical—and not just because one wonders how all these "private" letters were collected and preserved. As noted by Foucault, "a private letter may well have a signer—it does not have an author."⁶⁵ If a private person wrote the characters of *Xingrangtie* to a friend or group of friends, he did not write

as the author of the Wang Xizhi oeuvre. But if he was already self-aware of being Wang Xizhi the celebrated artist who expected his letter to be cherished, preserved, and transmitted for its artistic qualities, writings such as *Xingrangtie* wouldn't be personal, spontaneous letters at all—they would be consciously created representations of the artist and, as such, intended from their very inception for public and not private consumption.⁶⁶ There is strong contemporaneous evidence for such self-awareness: Wang Xianzhi once sent a letter to the emperor and in it requested that it be preserved for its superb calligraphy.⁶⁷ From such instances, Qianshen Bai observes that a "keen awareness that letters were collectible led to a conscious effort to make their literary style and the calligraphy in which they were written the objects of aesthetic appreciation."⁶⁸ Bai thus suggests that "while their texts were intended for private readers, their calligraphy was aimed at a public audience"; they were "private letters for public consumption."⁶⁹

But is there such a thing? However seemingly "private" the topics raised in these letters may be, their "publication," even if limited to a small aristocratic circle, categorically denies the notion of the private. The seemingly private character of these letters is precisely part of their public appeal, driven by the norms and expectations shared between the writer and his presumed audience: the "private person" is a publicly constructed and displayed *persona*—a mask and a representation. When, by Tang times, letters were "the overwhelming majority" of Wang Xizhi's extant works,⁷⁰ their audience of emperors and imperially appointed scholars recognized in their "private" character the exalted ethical disposition of the man retired from office. On its surface, the hermetic tone of a text like *Xingrangtie* thus appears to conform to the aesthetic and political ideal of the work of art as—in Adorno's formulation—"the non-identical" (*das Nichtidentische*),⁷¹ escaping an enforced identity and homogeneity with the empirical reality of the imperial cosmos. Yet here, the non-identical is ultimately a mirage: as the imperial calligraphy collections prized these works of "non-identity" above all others, they at once reconstructed them as seamlessly identical with the norms of the imperial state. The characters of *Xingrangtie* are part of the imperial canon not despite but because of their sublime resistance to the normative intelligibility of the imperially standardized script.

Performance, Style, and Copy

Meanwhile, the early history of the Wang Xizhi corpus—the centerpiece of the imperial collections of succeeding dynasties—was one of assembling, dispersing, and reas-

sembling during the tumultuous fourth through seventh centuries. By the early sixth century, forgery and questions of authenticity had become major concerns, as early medieval collections suffered repeated “calamities, yet new collections constantly mushroomed, some of them with a fantastic number of autographs.”⁷² This is the problem to which the many seals and colophons on a scroll like *Xingrangtie* are the answer: they authenticate, they document, and they anxiously safeguard the integrity of the scroll. And perhaps most important, they turn the scroll—copy or not—into an unquestionable and unique original in its own right: there only is one *Xingrangtie* bearing the seals of Song Huizong, Qianlong, and all the others around them.

While the collections of Wang's oeuvre kept changing, the idea of calligraphy as the unmediated expression of personality remained stable. As Lothar Ledderose has noted,

The art of calligraphy is unique among the arts in the world in that the process of creation in all its consecutive phases is visible in the object. A proper viewer follows with his eyes the brush movements through each of the characters and the sequence of the lines. He thus re-creates for himself the moments of the actual creation. The viewer senses the technical dexterity and subtleties in the movement of the writer's hand, and he may feel as if he looked over the shoulder of the writer himself and observed him while he wrote. The viewer thus establishes an immediate and personal rapport with the writer of the piece. In a quasi-graphological approach he asks what the formal qualities in the calligraphy reveal about the writer's personality.⁷³

The authenticity of a piece of calligraphy thereby certifies the authentic personality of its writer, and vice versa. While a poetic persona like Tao Qian could be constructed out of his words, a calligraphic persona like Wang Xizhi is constructed through the movement of his brush, seen as an extension of his mind.⁷⁴ Wang Xizhi's *Jinshu* biography allowed later connoisseurs of Wang's calligraphy to assign individual works to different phases of his life, making life and work illuminate and explain each other.

In this function of calligraphy as the authentic reflection of its writer's mind, perhaps the most important aspect of the brushwork was that once it was executed, it could not be changed. Poetry—as at the famous Orchid Pavilion meeting Wang presided over—was a performance art, but any extemporized poem remained open to further improvement after its initial composition and

recitation. Calligraphy, by contrast, did not: every flaw in a piece of writing was there to stay, a witness to the very act of performance never to be erased; every correction—for example, in *Lanting ji xu*—remained forever visible. While fundamentally non-propositional, calligraphy was still representational: not of its contents but of its singular moment of bodily enactment. It is precisely for this quality, and in this existential sense, that *Xingrangtie* embodies Wang Xizhi's persona not merely authentically but also truthfully regardless of the meaning—or even the decipherability—of its words.

But calligraphy has many forms, from seal script to the regular clerical script and, further, to running and cursive script. The first two, of course, demand the writer's surrender to a set of fixed, detailed rules, a quest for perfection where true mastery, together with the persona of the true master, is found in the erasure of individual aberration. The master of seal and clerical script only appears from his own invisibility in the perfected characters. This invisible master embodies at once the weakest and the strongest sense of agency: the weakest in his surrender to rules, and the strongest in the absolute control of their slow and meticulous execution. Calligraphy in cursive script, on the other hand, seems to reverse this paradox: here, the writer's authorial agency is strongest in his expression of individual, even idiosyncratic, choices, but—because of the fast motion of the brush—it is also the weakest in his inability to fully control or predict the result. Every flaw will remain as testimony to the writer's unique act of performance.

Wang Xizhi was considered a master of both the regular and the running and cursive styles, and pieces from all three styles attributed to him were included in the imperial catalogues of model calligraphies, available to be studied and copied.⁷⁵ But the writings in regular script formed a tiny fraction of his canonical oeuvre; instead, he (like his son) was celebrated primarily for his running and especially his cursive style, that is, the forms of writing whereby the writer gained in the appearance of spontaneous inspiration what he gave up in control. The ideal of carefully orchestrated “naturalness” and “spontaneity,” merely claimed in Tao Qian or Su Shi's poetry,⁷⁶ gained visible proof in the traces of the moving brush. In the traditional Wang Xizhi narrative, the extreme manifestation of these qualities was found in Wang's famous attempt to re-create his own masterful writing of *Lanting ji xu*, the “most celebrated piece of calligraphy of all time,”⁷⁷ the very next day: despite trying hundreds of times, he failed to repeat his own original feat.⁷⁸ Supremely ironic, this unique result of a single calligraphic performance—experimentally proven to be unachievable by sheer will and effort—was then copied, from

copies, through the ages. To this day, *Lanting ji xu* displays a “natural” self, unmoored from office and convention, radiating its Wang Xizhi persona into works like *Xingrangtie*, and hence allowing viewers to recognize the writer’s authenticity in the graceful lines of a text without particular meaning or purpose. But this text is a copy.

Before the Tang, the self-expressive modes of running and cursive script were rarely suited for official use; in Wang’s own time, according to Wen Fong, it was a veritable “rejection of the state-sponsored monumental style.”⁷⁹ Even though cursive script may have originated as shorthand writing in court administration,⁸⁰ to write in such fluid script was generally, in Wang’s time, to write in private and for whimsical purposes, and for a small circle of family and like-minded friends. That both the calligraphy and the content of *Xingrangtie* are barely decipherable only confirms its casual, effortless authenticity: the letter was not written for us (or for the imperial audience) in the first place; as outsiders, we are, by definition, not supposed to understand its idiom. Non-identical with our purposes, its nobility may be admired from an unbridgeable distance, but it cannot be appropriated.

The Sage and the State

This apparently unbridgeable distance reveals *Xingrangtie*’s ultimate paradox. By Tang Taizong’s time, the emperor himself was not merely among the ardent copyists of Wang’s works; his imperial edicts were often written in running or cursive script as well, and were canonized for that in Song Huizong’s *Xuanhe Calligraphy Catalogue*.⁸¹ But nowhere is the imperial appropriation of Wang Xizhi’s non-identical art more directly performed than in the hailstorm of colophons and seals surrounding the fifteen characters of *Xingrangtie*. If the letter ever occupied a space of private quietude outside the world of officialdom, it was not left alone there. The “sage of calligraphy” was a sage only because he was recognized by other sages: the monarchs whose own sagehood—like that of the ancient “plain king” (*suwang* 素王) Confucius—was premised on their supreme capacity for recognition, perception, and discrimination. His exalted virtue, revealed in the traces of his brush, depended on the imperial state to be known and perpetuated. From the collections of the (Liu-)Song emperors Xiaowu 孝武 (r. 452–464) and Ming 明 (r. 465–472) to those of the Liang emperor Wu, and then, further, all the way from the two Sui emperors to Tang Taizong, Song Huizong, Qianlong, and, finally, Jiaqing, Wang’s letters survived in the imperial embrace.

But the imperial state was more than the sequence and sum of its emperors. Among the Song dynasty calligraphers included in Huizong’s *Xuanhe Calligraphy Catalogue*, “men who served in high court posts or had other connections to the Song court are especially well represented.”⁸² Moreover, from the seventh through the twentieth centuries, *Xingrangtie* moved back and forth between imperial and private collections, being touched by monarchs, officials, and literati alike. Scholars and emperors recognized in it the same set of shared cultural, ethical, and political ideals. The choices made by connoisseurs such as Dong Qichang, An Qi, and others who left their seals and colophons on *Xingrangtie* emerged from the larger tradition of *wen* 文 (culture as writing) that was continually validated at the imperial court and by those who aspired to serve it. The Wang Xizhi persona known to us was not tainted but constituted by this embrace; under Tang Taizong, his court official Chu Sui-liang 褚遂良 (596–658) firmly established the Wang Xizhi tradition of thousands of copies and no originals.⁸³ Thus, when Taizong took the presumed original of *Lanting ji xu* with him into his grave, placing it into the time-honored religious space of the tomb and its occupant’s afterlife, he exalted the work but did not erase it.⁸⁴ It continued to exist in the “genuine traces” of copies after copies, a tradition of cultural performance and participation that *was* the tradition of *wen*, carried along with the ownership and reproduction of its artifacts and authenticated with seals and colophons.

Consumed and repeatedly re-created by the imperial state, Wang Xizhi’s oeuvre—and *Xingrangtie* prominently within it—is therefore not an expression of the master calligrapher’s mind but a representation of the cultural history of imperial China. As its ever-changing configurations moved into, out of, and back into the imperial collections of succeeding emperors and dynasties, with the imperial copy at once displacing and perpetuating its source, it grew into the supreme icon of the empire’s continuous possession, loss, and reconstitution of culture as writing.⁸⁵ If Wang Xizhi’s original writing was informal and without purpose, its presence in thousands of copies was not: created with utmost care on specially prepared paper, its very existence was imperially commissioned. Likewise, the labels, colophons, and eighty-seven seals on *Xingrangtie* are not additions to the real thing—they *are* the real thing: the eminently intelligible text that could be continued, in principle forever, as the diachronic monument to the imperial Wang Xizhi persona, where with each addition to the ever-lengthening scroll, the “genuine traces” became an ever smaller part of the whole. There is, after all, no Wang Xizhi other than the one whose ambiguous, late-in-life distance in

relation to the court became dialectically sublated and absorbed in court culture, whose swift, spontaneous, and uncontrollable moves of the brush were rewritten with meticulous precision and painstaking patience, whose biography emerged from the Tang imperial court, and whose individuality was deciphered from copies of copies. *Xingrangtie* embodies a tradition inscribed and reinscribed over and against the total loss of origin.

Beyond Innocence

Looking again at *Xingrangtie* and its few siblings of Tang tracing copies scattered across East Asia, there is no return to some innocent admiration of the master's hand and spirit. And yet, there is also no end to the marvel and wonder one may feel when contemplating the fifteen characters in front of us. In Robert Harrist's description,

The copy recreates the buoyant, energetic flow of Wang's characters, which seem fully three-dimensional and are enlivened by constant changes of thickness in the brushstrokes that resemble twisting wires. The letter also reflects Wang's inventiveness in writing recurring configurations of strokes. For example, the dots in the two characters of the first column and the first, third, and fourth characters of the second column demonstrate the wide range of visual effects that can be achieved in even the simplest of calligraphic forms.⁸⁶

But to recognize such beauty, it does not suffice to narrow one's eyes and try to look past the seals and colophons. Instead, we must restore *Xingrangtie* to something that perhaps it never truly was: the non-identical work of art beyond its functions for the cultural and political tradition, a classic that, in the words of Italo Calvino, "has never finished saying what it has to say."⁸⁷ For this, removing the words "copy" and "Wang" may well be a good start.

That said, it remains important to acknowledge the epistemological limitations of the present study, or of any approach to *Xingrangtie*. The variables in the reconstruction of the original work are impossible to control. There is no evidence for reconstructing a credible and dependable record for the original composition of the text together with Wang Xizhi's psychological disposition or intent; for the circumstances of its copying presumably at some point during the Tang (or later, on Tang paper?); for the gaps of centuries between Wang Xizhi's time and the time of the copying, between the making of the copy and the time of Song Huizong's seals, and

between Huizong's time and the late Ming; for the question of whether or not *Xingrangtie* should be connected to the "second half" first noted in the ninth century; for deciding with confidence how to transcribe the four disputed characters within *Xingrangtie*, not to mention the two undecipherable characters in the "second half"; for the possibly debilitating damage to the last character of *Xingrangtie*; for the period of time when the scroll lingered in Japan; for the cuts and remountings of the text; and, altogether, for the authenticity of the scroll that entered Huizong's court. More likely than not, the above-offered translation—just like the existing Japanese translations—is inadequate or just wrong, but we won't know how wrong, or in what ways wrong; and if it is actually right, we won't know that either. To take all these variables into account sends the mind spinning at ever-increasing velocity. Strictly speaking, *Xingrangtie* cannot be read. It can only be looked at.

To write about *Xingrangtie* is thus an exercise in scholarly humility; this, together with the recognition of beauty, may be the real conclusion. At a time when every academic essay sets out to "argue" this or that, however banal the matter, *Xingrangtie* teaches its audience that, fundamentally, humanistic inquiry is not as much about proving and scoring points, or about reducing complexity to the size of one's own limitations and preconceptions, as it is about looking at the thing at hand with patience and asking questions worthy of its endless complexity. Viewed from this perspective, *Xingrangtie* is simply an astonishing gift. If Calvino is right (and I think he is) that "the only reason one can possibly adduce [for reading the classics] is that to read the classics is better than not to read the classics," then to look at *Xingrangtie* is simply better than not to look at *Xingrangtie*.

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Notes

1. For his official biography, see *Jinshu* 晉書 (History of the Jin) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 80.2093–2102; for a biographical study, Ki Shōshun [Qi Xiaochun] 祁小春, *Ō Gishi ronkō* 王羲之論考 (A study and discussion of Wang Xizhi) (Osaka: Tōhō shuppansha, 2001), esp. 152–249. See also Richard B. Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of the Tales of the World*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 2002), 530–31.

2. Eugene Y. Wang, “The Taming of the Shrew: Wang Hsi-chih (303–61) and Calligraphic Gentrification in the Seventh Century,” in *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Cary Y. Liu et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 1999), 145.

3. For a detailed discussion of Wang Xizhi’s commitment to Daoism, see Ki Shōshun, *Ō Gishi ronkō*, 251–351.

4. See Alan J. Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement: The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Early Medieval China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

5. Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 40.

6. See, e.g., Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, 338: “Contemporaries characterized Wang Hsi-chih as follows: ‘Now drifting like a floating cloud; now rearing up like a startled dragon.’” This is another parallel to Tao Qian; see Stephen Owen, “The Self’s Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography,” in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 71–102. For the reception and “making” of Tao Qian, see Xiaofei Tian, *Tao Yuanming & Manuscript Culture: The Record of a Dusty Table* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005); and especially Wendy Swartz, *Reading Tao Yuanming: Shifting Paradigms of Historical Reception (427–1900)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008). For Wang Xizhi’s reception history, Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 43, notes that “many pieces in the impe-

rial collections simply could not have been originals. As a result of the selections and additions that were made in each collection the image of the classical masters must constantly have changed.”

7. Including Daoist (*Huangting jing* 黃庭經 [Yellow court scripture]) and Buddhist scriptures as well as stele inscriptions such as *Yue Yi lun* 樂毅論 (On Yue Yi) and *Xiao-nü Cao E bei* 孝女曹娥碑 (Stele for the filial daughter Cao E); see the examples in Yang Lu 楊璐, *Wang Xizhi shufa quanji* 王羲之書法全集 (Complete collection of Wang Xizhi’s calligraphy), vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1999); *Wang Xizhi shufa ji* 王羲之書法集 (Wang Xizhi’s collected calligraphy) (Beijing: Beijing gongyi meishu chubanshe, 2005); and Tōkyō National Museum et al., *Shosei Ō Gishi: tokubetsuten* 王羲之：特別展 (Wang Xizhi: Special Exhibition; English title: Wang Xizhi: Master Calligrapher) (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 2013). On the official canonization of *Yue Yi lun*, see Wang, “The Taming of the Shrew,” 149.

8. As noted by Qianshen Bai, “Chinese Letters: Private Words Made Public,” in *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection*, ed. Robert E. Harrist Jr. and Wen C. Fong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 1999), 383. Antje Richter, “Beyond Calligraphy: Reading Wang Xizhi’s Letters,” *T’oung Pao* 96, nos. 4–5 (2010): 372, notes that about seven hundred personal notes by Wang are still known today. While Richter discusses Wang’s letters as literature (as opposed to calligraphy), this distinction was probably not made in Wang’s own time. The fact that the tradition has preserved so many of his personal letters (most of them of rather trivial content) is no doubt due to their original reception as masterpieces of calligraphy. As Richter (p. 374, n. 8) notes, the second-largest corpus of letters from the period—of no more than about eighty pieces—is by Wang’s son, likewise a famed calligrapher.

9. Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 13, 26.

10. Yang Yuanzheng 楊元錚, “Junjia lianghang shi’er zi, qiya ye hou san wan jian: Pulinsidun daxue yishu bowuguan cang ‘Xingrangtie’ liuchuan kaolue” 君家兩行十二字，氣壓鄴侯三萬籤：普林斯頓大學藝術博物館藏《行穰帖》流傳略考 (The twelve characters in two lines in your collection at home, Sir—their atmosphere counts for more than the 30,000 volumes of the Duke of Ye: A brief examination of the transmission of *Xingrangtie* in the collection of the Princeton University Art Museum; English title: “The Tang Tracing Copy of Wang Xizhi’s Calligraphy, *Ritual to Pray for Good Harvest: A Study of Its Provenance*”), *Gugong bowuguan yuankan* 故宮博物館院刊 2008.1:8. Yang’s article is the most complete study of the provenance of *Xingrangtie*. Other excellent studies include Robert E. Harrist Jr., “A Letter from Wang Hsi-chih and the Culture of Chinese Calligraphy,” in Harrist and Fong, *The Embodied Image*, 243–59; Shen C. Y. Fu, *Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 5–8, 241–43; and Cary Y. Liu, “Strangers in

a Strange Land: From the Qing Palaces to the Princeton University Art Museum,” in *The Last Emperor's Collection: Masterpieces of Painting and Calligraphy from the Liaoning Provincial Museum*, ed. Willow Weilan Hai Chang et al. (New York: China Institute, 2008), 299–322, esp. 302–3.

11. For the statistics, see Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture: The Collections of Emperor Huizong* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 208–18. For Huizong's calligraphy catalogue, *ibid.*, 204–56, 421–26.

12. Yang Yuanzheng, “Junjia lianghang shi'er zi,” 6, citing Qi Gong 啓功, lists nine copies that are generally accepted to date from the Tang. While there is general (though not unanimous) consensus about the Tang provenance of these copies, no evidence is available to date them more specifically. On November 20, 2010, another handscroll believed to be a Tang copy was auctioned in Beijing to an anonymous buyer for 308 million yuan, at the time more than 46 million US\$ (<http://arts.cultural-china.com/en/63Arts10054.html>; <http://www.baike.com/wiki/《平安帖》>). On April 17, 2015, the collector Liu Yijian 劉益謙 announced that after five years of thinking, he now wishes “to return the scroll home,” namely, to the Long Museum he had founded in Shanghai in 2012 (http://news.99ys.com/news/2015/0417/9_191667_1.shtml). In January 2013, the discovery of another Tang copy, in a private collection in Japan, was reported by the Agence France Press (<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/01/09/national/japan-finds-rare-copy-of-tang-dynasty-wang-xizhis-work/#.VKDph8ACA>).

13. For images of the entire scroll, see <http://etcweb.princeton.edu/asianart/selectionsdetail.jsp?ctry=China&pd=Disunity%7CTang&cid=1091443>. On John B. Elliott and the Princeton collection, see Valerie C. Doran, “Mining the Seams of Language: John B. Elliott and the Collection of Chinese Calligraphy,” *Orientalisms* 30, no. 3 (1999): 106–8; and Maxwell K. Hearn, “A Tribute to John Brailsford Elliott (1928–97),” *Orientalisms* 30, no. 3 (1999): 108–10.

14. For Zhang's transcription, see his *Fashu yaolu* 法書要錄 (Essentials of calligraphy) (*Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 ed.), 10.169; also Yan Kejun 嚴可均, “Quan Jin wen” 全晉文 (Complete prose of the Jin dynasty), 24.4b, in Yan, *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han sanguo liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Complete prose of High Antiquity, the Three Eras, Qin, Han, Three Kingdoms, and Six Dynasties) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 1594; Yang Yuanzheng, “Junjia lianghang shi'er zi,” 8.

15. For two rather different Japanese translations, see Tōkyō National Museum et al., *Shosei Ō Gishi*, 278, and Morino Shigeo 森野繁夫 and Satō Toshiyuki 佐藤利行, *Ō Gishi zen shokan* 王羲之全書翰 (Complete brushwork of Wang Xizhi) (Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 1996), 326–27, #293, with the latter also including the second half of the letter. For a tentative summary in English, again including the second half, see Harrist, “A Letter from Wang Hsi-chih,” 245. The final character presents a particular problem. If the present *Xingrangtie* is read on its own, it may end with the character *jia* 佳, which appears some 180 times in Wang's

letters (Antje Richter, personal communication); if it connects to the “second half” of the text, the reading *ren* 任 is far more compelling. However, as noted by Fu, *Traces of the Brush*, 7, the character “contains a faint ink outline between the right and left parts, indicating the presence of a break or repair in the original”—an observation I have been able to verify when looking at the original through a strong magnifying glass. If the middle part of the character is thus missing, all bets are off—it surely will be neither *jia* nor *ren*. In this case, the damage must have been there already in the version seen by Zhang Yanyuan.

16. See Harrist, “A Letter from Wang Hsi-chih.” On the relative freedom copyists could allow themselves, see Ledderose, “Some Taoist Elements in the Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties,” *T'oung Pao* 70, nos. 4–5 (1984): 271.

17. In part because I treat the fifteen characters in isolation from the purported second half of the letter, my parsing differs considerably from Yan Kejun's.

18. Bai, “Chinese Letters,” 383. As noted by Ledderose, “Some Taoist Elements,” 271: “The faithfulness of copies varied widely, and it appears that more often than not the copyist introduced changes into his copy. Such changes ranged from simple mistakes and small corrections that may have been perfectly justified and often were done with the best intention, to embellishments and rearrangements of entire texts and to outright forgeries. Judging from the extent of these falsifications, one can imagine that there was also considerable confusion in the early transmission of the works of the Two Wangs.”

19. Books with *Xingrangtie* as their sole cover image include Fu, *Traces of the Brush; Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Cary Y. Liu et al.; Tōkyō National Museum et al., *Shosei Ō Gishi*; and *Chinese Calligraphy* Ouyang Zhongshi et al., ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). *Xingrangtie* also serves as the frontispiece of Harrist and Fong, *The Embodied Image*.

20. See Harrist, “A Letter from Wang Xizhi,” 242–43; Tōkyō National Museum et al., *Shosei Ō Gishi*, 102–3.

21. The placement of this slip is the result of the remounting by the Metropolitan Museum; a photographic copy of the scroll (also held in the Princeton University Art Museum) shows that when the scroll was still in Japan, Qianlong's title slip was placed to the left of Zhang Daqian's large seals in the following section. The place from where it was removed has been patched. During the Qing dynasty, the Palace Treasury was part of the Imperial Household agency.

22. The waxed paper used for tracing copies.

23. Richard Barnhart, “Wang Shen and Late Northern Sung Landscape Painting,” in Society for International Exchange of Arthistorical Studies, *Ajia ni okeru sansui hyōgen ni tsuite* アジアにおける山水表現について (The representation of landscape in Asia; English title: *International Symposium on Arthistorical Studies* 2) (Kyoto: Kokusai Kōryū bijutsushi kenkyūkai, 1983): 62. Barnhart, 61–64, discusses in detail the standardized spatial arrangement of Huizong's title slip and various seals on paintings and calligraphies in

the emperor's collection. *Xingrangtie* displays the nearly complete version of this "Xuanhe 宣和 program" arrangement. For further extensive discussion of Huizong's seals, see Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 114–21, 373–96, 409–11.

24. For the list of seals, see Fu, *Traces of the Brush*, 241. The Princeton University Art Museum holds handwritten notes identifying all the seals.

25. Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 99, 100, 106; Barnhart, "Wang Shen," 63–64, 69.

26. See Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 17, 20–24, for comments from Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) and Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), especially on *Lanting ji xu*. On Ruan Yuan's doubts, see also Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Council on East Asian Studies, 1990), 193, 197.

27. See Harrist, "A Letter from Wang Hsi-chih," 252–55.

28. For the rearrangement of the *Xingrangtie* seals and colophons (and also the different spacing of Wang Xizhi's characters) in the *Sanxi tang* catalogue, see Maxwell K. Hearn, *Cultivated Landscapes: Chinese Paintings from the Collection of Marie-Hélène and Guy Weill* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), 139–43; also Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 220–21.

29. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

30. Robert E. Harrist Jr., "Replication and Deception in Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties Period," in *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, ed. Zong-qi Cai (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 32, 45.

31. Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 114–15.

32. Yang Yuanzheng, "Junjia lianghang shi'er zi," 9. For the "yushu" seal, see Barnhart, "Wang Shen," 61; Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 373–74.

33. Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 120–21.

34. See, e.g., F. W. Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 916; Mote, "The Intellectual Climate in Eighteenth-Century China: Glimpses of Beijing, Suzhou and Yangzhou in the Qianlong Period," *Phoebus* 6, no. 1 (1988): 23.

35. Liu, "Strangers in a Strange Land," 302.

36. Kohara Hironobu, "The Qianlong Emperor's Skill in the Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting," *Phoebus* 6, no. 1 (1988): 56.

37. This seal is from the Qianlong period or later. It refers to the "Leshou tang" 樂壽堂 (Hall of joy and longevity) that in 1772 was constructed in the imperial Qingyiyuan 清漪園 (later Yiheyuan 頤和園) garden. Liu, "Strangers in a Strange Land," 302–3, doubts the hypothesis that the scroll left the imperial collection during the British and French lootings of 1860.

38. *Lidai shufa lunwenxuan* 歷代書法論文選 (Selection of studies on calligraphy from successive eras) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1979), vol. 1, 81.

39. *Qiyue duxia ertie* 七月都下二帖 (Seventh month and In the capital, two calligraphies), *Kuaixue shiqingtie* 快雪時晴帖 (Timely sunny after snow), *Youmutie* 游目帖 (Sightseeing), and *Zhongyao qianziwen* 鍾繇千字文 (Zhong Yao's thousand-character essay); see He Chuanxin 何傳馨 et al., *Jin Wang Xizhi moji* 晉王羲之墨跡 (Ink traces of Wang Xizhi from the Jin dynasty) (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 2010), 5, 17, 39–40; *Wang Xizhi shufaji*, 187, 204–5, 432–33.

40. Yang Yuanzheng, "Junjia lianghang shi'er zi," 17.

41. In fact, Su Shi's praise seems to include both Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi; see Yang Yuanzheng, "Junjia lianghang shi'er zi," 21–22, who argues that Qianlong misunderstood Dong Qichang's comment. For Su Shi's poem, see Wang Wengao 王文誥, *Su Shi shiji* 蘇軾詩集 (Collected poetry of Su Shi) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 32.1685.

42. The term *zhenji* is often ambiguous, being variously applied either to someone's original writing or to a truthful copy. However, here it is clear that Dong, Qianlong, and Wang Youdong all use it to insist that *Xingrangtie* is by Wang Xizhi's own hand. Zhang Chou understands the term the same way when writing that, on closer inspection, he had found that Wang's calligraphy was written on Tang paper and hence "determined that it is not *zhenji*" (*ding fei zhenji* 定非真跡).

43. For the entire discussion, see Yang Yuanzheng, "Junjia lianghang shi'er zi," 9–16.

44. Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 21–22. "An idiolect denotes 'the 'style' of a writer, although this is always pervaded by certain verbal patterns coming from tradition, that is, from the community" or, alternatively, "the language of a linguistic community, that is, of a group of persons who all interpret in the same way all linguistic statements." It is the language that speaks to an audience of insiders but becomes unintelligible to a removed secondary audience.

45. Wade T. Wheelock, "The Problem of Ritual Language: From Information to Situation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 1 (1982): 50.

46. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1966), 233; see also Maurice Bloch, "Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: Is Religion an Extreme Form of Traditional Authority?" *European Journal of Sociology* 15, no. 1 (1974): 71.

47. See Richter, "Beyond Calligraphy."

48. Wang, "The Taming of the Shrew," 159; Bai, "Chinese Letters," 389–93.

49. Richter, "Beyond Calligraphy," 396.

50. Patrizia Violi, "Letters," in *Discourse and Literature*, ed. Teun A. van Dijk (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1985), 160; here cited from Richter, "Beyond Calligraphy," 391.

51. Considering how comparatively few letters exist from his contemporaries, it is not possible to assess any particular distinctions of Wang's phrasing.

52. Wang, "The Taming of the Shrew," 136.

53. See Wang, "The Taming of the Shrew"; also Stephen J. Goldberg, "Court Calligraphy of the Early T'ang Dynasty," *Artibus Asiae* 49 (1988–89): 189–237; and Zhu Guantian, "An Epoch of Eminent Calligraphers: The Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties," in *Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Zhongshi et al., 196–97, 205–8.
54. See Richter, "Beyond Calligraphy," 389–90.
55. Bai Qianshen 白謙慎, "Cong Fu Shan he Dai Tingshi de jiaowang lun ji Zhongguo shufa zhong de yingchou he xiuci wenti" 從傅山和戴廷式的交往論及中國書法中的應酬和修辭問題 (Social intercourse and rhetoric in Chinese calligraphy from the perspective of the exchanges between Fu Shan and Dai Tingshi), *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 16, no. 4 (1999): 95–133; and 17, no. 1 (1999): 137–56.
56. See Sun Guoting's *Shupu* 書譜 (On calligraphy), translated in Chang Ch'ung-ho and Hans H. Frankel, *Two Chinese Treatises on Calligraphy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 1–16, esp. 10–12; also Wang, "The Taming of the Shrew," 142; Qianshen Bai, *Fu Shan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 221; and Cong Wenjun, "An Overview of Ancient Calligraphic Theories," in *Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Zhongshi et al., 430–31.
57. Bai, *Fu Shan's World*, 221–22.
58. Ronald C. Egan, "Ou-yang Hsiu and Su Shih on Calligraphy," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49, no. 2 (1989): 377; see also Wang, "The Taming of the Shrew," 160.
59. Ronald C. Egan, *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–72)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 30–31.
60. Egan, "Ou-yang Hsiu and Su Shih on Calligraphy," 371–73; Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 208, 240–41.
61. Ronald C. Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1994), 263.
62. See Thomas A. Wilson, *Genealogy of the Way: The Construction and Uses of the Confucian Tradition in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).
63. Wen C. Fong, "Prologue: Chinese Calligraphy as Presenting the Self," in *Chinese Calligraphy*, ed. Zhongshi et al., 14.
64. Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 208.
65. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 148.
66. In other words, an early letter by Wang may well have been just a letter, but at some point in his life, with his fame established, he knew that the addressee would treat the letter differently from being merely an ordinary letter.
67. Bai, "Chinese Letters," 381.
68. *Ibid.*, 382.
69. *Ibid.*, 382, 386.
70. *Ibid.*, 383.
71. Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Aesthetic theory) (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1990), 114.
72. Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 42.
73. *Ibid.*, 29.
74. See Qianshen Bai, "The Brush Sings and the Ink Dances: Performance and Rhetoric in Chinese Calligraphy," paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Asian Studies, Boston, March 22–26, 1994.
75. Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 221, 225, 230.
76. See Zhiyi Yang, *Dialectics of Spontaneity: The Aesthetics and Ethics of Su Shi (1037–1101) in Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
77. Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 12.
78. *Ibid.*, 19.
79. Fong, "Prologue," 8. Fong may be slightly overstating his case; emperors since the Eastern Han are known to have sponsored writings in cursive script. It is true, however, that this style was rarely used in official contexts.
80. According to the rhapsody "Fei caoshu" 非草書 (Against cursive writing) attributed (not indisputably) to Zhao Yi 趙壹 (fl. ca. 180); see Yan Kejun, "Quan Hou-Han wen" 全後漢文 (Complete prose of the Latter Han), 82.9b–11a, in Yan, *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han sanguo liuchao wen*, 916–17.
81. Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture*, 233–35.
82. *Ibid.*, 245–55.
83. As noted by Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 28, Chu Suiliang "held the monopoly as the arbiter in matters of Wang Hsi-chih and thus had a decisive role in shaping the image of Wang Hsi-chih as it appeared to later generations."
84. The collection of copies of Wang's *Lanting ji xu*, *Lanting moji huibian* 蘭亭墨蹟彙編 (Compilation of ink traces from Lanting) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1985), contains eight versions—six from the Tang and two from the Yuan dynasty. Mi Fu knew "more than ten copies" (Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 76). Jiang Kui 姜夔 (ca. 1155–ca. 1221) in his *Xu shupu* 續書譜 (On calligraphy, continued) speaks of "more than several hundred copies" circulating at his time; see Chang and Frankel, *Two Chinese Treatises*, 25; also Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 20, and Harrist, "Replication and Deception," 46–49.
85. The history of the imperial collection often mirrored the strength and fate of dynastic rule, with powerful emperors seeking to boost their political legitimacy by amassing prestigious artifacts that, in turn, left the court in times of political weakness and disintegration; see Lothar Ledderose, "Some Observations on the Imperial Art Collection in China," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 43 (1978–1979): 38–46. Thus, just as *Xingrangtie* repeatedly moved into and out of the imperial collection, other works such as Wang Xizhi's *Fengjutie* 奉橘帖 (Presenting tangerines) did exactly the same.
86. In Harrist and Fong, *The Embodied Image*, 92 (catalogue number 2).
87. Italo Calvino, "Why Read the Classics," trans. Patrick Creagh, *New York Review of Books*, October 9, 1986 (online at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1986/oct/09/why-read-the-classics/>).