

# ***Dunhuang Calligraphy and Poetry Works on the Study of Chinese History and Dunhuang's Promotion of Calligraphy Works***

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**Abstract:** Chinese calligraphy and poetry are important components of Chinese traditional culture, with profound historical significance and cultural symbols. In the vicissitudes of history, they have experienced wars and various factors have led to them not being given important attention. But their place in the Chinese cultural system cannot be ignored. In particular, the relationship between poetry and Chinese calligraphy was important in the Central Plains Dynasty's control of Dunhuang. By analyzing the unearthed relics of Dunhuang calligraphy works and the original poems unearthed in Dunhuang, this study explores how Chinese calligraphy and poetry reflect the changes of ancient history and their impact on society. Research shows that these art forms are not only the expression of personal feelings and thoughts, but also important materials for historical research. It can confirm the appearance of politics and society at that time from the side, and provide valuable materials for modern scholars to study history, so that we can better understand the evolution of Chinese history and cultural integration.

**Keywords:** calligraphy, bamboo slip, official script, Jiangjinjiu, grottoes, geographical condition.

## **1. Introduction**

Dunhuang is recognized as an important city on the Silk Road. It has been unearthed Chinese calligraphy works and the ancient Central Plains government control of the Silk Road research has received little attention. Chinese calligraphy works were used as an important tool to record historical events in ancient times. However, in different dynasties, the styles of calligraphy and the number of works unearthed in Dunhuang varied. Due to the special arid geographical conditions of Dunhuang, most of the Chinese calligraphy works are well protected in temples or caves. This article will talk in detail about Dunhuang calligraphy and poetry works on the study of Chinese history and Dunhuang's promotion of calligraphy works. This article will try to answer why the number of Chinese calligraphy works excavated in Dunhuang varies from period to period. It is explained in two parts. The first part tells the story of the different styles of calligraphy unearthed in Dunhuang, which can prove the period when the work was produced, so as to understand its historical background. The second part will talk about how can Dunhuang calligraphy art further explore Chinese history. The third part is to introduce the legacy of Dunhuang calligraphy works on the current calligraphy in the end what kind of influence. Hopefully this paper can explain why the calligraphy art can study Chinese history.

The main challenge of this study is that the distance between Dunhuang and the capital of the Central Plains is relatively long, and there will be poor information, which will lead to unknown marking time of Chinese calligraphy works. Most of them are stone tablets, and only parts of the text have been properly preserved. And in some dynasties Dunhuang was not controlled by the Central Plains government. Therefore, in some cases, the Chinese calligraphy works can not be reasonable evidence to prove the topic.

## **2. The various calligraphy styles found in Dunhuang help date the work and reveal its historical context**

As an important city on the Silk Road and ancient China to other countries. There are a lot of Chinese calligraphy works produced in Dunhuang, but the characters produced in different periods are also different. The number of calligraphy works appearing in Dunhuang today is still unparalleled. Due to Dunhuang's arid climate and special geographical location, many Chinese calligraphy works have been properly preserved in various caves. These brushstrokes are a valuable source for the broader study of Chinese calligraphy in Chinese history, but scholars have largely ignored the culture of these written letters and the changes in their medium. These brush works can produce a more important connection and understanding of the relationship between the Central Plains and the frontier in ancient China. There had been a lack of attention to the epistolary culture and literature in China in modern and premodern times. First of all, letters play no remarkable role in the texts of the Confucian canon. Second of all, due to the complexity of the Chinese characters, the invention of the mechanical typewriter had little impact on the Chinese communication methods. The culture of letter writing was still alive until the mid 1990s when email and text-messaging were popularized [1].

During the Han Dynasty, Zhang Qian was an envoy to the Western Regions, opening up the Hexi Corridor and the route to the Western regions of the Han Dynasty. Dunhuang became an important city. So Dunhuang scholars recorded historical events in bamboo slips. In the Han Dynasty, bamboo slips, as the main form of recorded writing, had a long storage time and was not easy to be damaged. It occupied a small area and was convenient for storage. The ink and brush characters of that time are still clearly visible to this day, so the calligraphy works of the Han Dynasty were mainly written on bamboo slips. Due to the limited space of bamboo slips, the calligraphy characters will be very small. However, in the Han Dynasty, the font thickness of the Chinese calligraphy works did not change much. The main reason is that in the Han Dynasty, brush characters were more used as a recording tool. It does not have any artistic meaning, so it is not necessary to write the words very good-looking or too beautiful. The purpose is to record more information in the limited bamboo slips. Due to the special geographical environment of Dunhuang, the number of trees and bamboo is not very large. Bamboo slips also became very rare, and the process of making bamboo slips became very complicated and even required transporting large amounts of raw materials from the Central Plains to make bamboo slips.

Unearthed in Gansu Province, the most Han seal script inscriptions still exist today are: "Wuwei Zhang Bosheng coffin inscription", "Wuwei Huzi Liang coffin inscription", "Wuwei Guzang Zhang □□ coffin inscription" and "Zhangye Duwei letter", these works should be the so-called "virga letter", the strokes are winding, interspersed, graceful and charming, the conclusion is prominent and dense contrast, or emphasize the full character grid, the body square is uniform, and you have Li Meaning, and the brushwork from the small seal style of circular and graceful evolution to flexion winding. It is one of the few works of Han seal ink that has survived so far [2].

Due to the influence of the Qin Dynasty, official script remained the official font of the Han Dynasty. The term "official script" refers to the standardized writing system. It was used in an important recording text and utensils. In the official script of Han Dynasty, the font is relatively flat. The twist of the stroke is very square. Both vertical and horizontal strokes have appeared to give him

more momentum and a more fluent writing style. The whole word looks very straight and upright, feel its solemn.

Since the writing form of the frontier in the Han Dynasty was basically the same as that of the Central Plains, it can reflect the extremely high control of the frontier in the Han Dynasty, which was an extremely powerful dynasty.

However, after hundreds of years of evolution, by the Song Dynasty, Dunhuang and most of the territory of the Silk Road were no longer within the sphere of influence of the ancient Central Plains government.

By the time of the Song Dynasty, the Silk Road was no longer as useful as in the Han and Tang Dynasties, leaving important cities in the Western regions, such as Dunhuang, poorly protected. And the frontier power of the Song Dynasty was further weakened. At that time, Dunhuang was no longer a stable city, but was constantly attacked by various small countries in the Western regions such as Shi State, Pu Li State, Pu Xiang State, Wusun State. Moreover, because they were far from the territory of the Song Dynasty, their information gap was further increased.

Cave 427 of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, as a cave originally dug in the Sui Dynasty, underwent a very large scale repair and reconstruction in the Song Dynasty. There's a paragraph on it about the revision: "維大宋乾德八年歲次庚午正月類卯朔二十六日戊辰敕推誠奉國保塞功臣歸義軍節度使特進檢校太師兼中書令西平王曹元忠之世創建此窟簷紀。(Wei Big Song Gan De eight years old Gengwu first month class MAO Shuo 26 hundred days Chen reschi push Chengfeng national security hero return to the army to make special inspection school Taishi and book order Xiping king Cao Yuanzhong the world to create this cave eave)" [3].



Figure 1: The role of Chinese calligraphy in inferring the history of Song Dynasty

The cave was built in 970 AD, while the Northern Song Dynasty's Gande year is only six years old, and 970 AD is already three years of Kaibao. However, the eight years of Gande recorded on the beam of the cave indicate that the method of timekeeping in Dunhuang has lagged far behind that in

the Central Plains. At that time, the traffic from the Central Plains to Dunhuang was very inconvenient, information had not reached a rapid circulation, the Central Plains had changed the emperor, but the people in Dunhuang did not know. Although this cave was built in the Song Dynasty, the writing on it is still the Tang Dynasty style. Moreover, the calligraphy characters in the Song Dynasty are small, thin and thin, while the calligraphy characters recorded on the beams of the Dunhuang caves are larger and thicker. It can be seen that the control of Dunhuang area in the Song Dynasty was far less than that in the Tang Dynasty.

In the Song Dynasty, the ethnic regimes established in northwest China included Ganzhou, Uighur, Qiuci Uighur, Gaochang Uighur, Khotan Dynasty, Shazhou GUI Army, Liangzhou Tubo, Qing Tang Tubo and Western Xia. Among them, Khotan was subordinate to the Western Regions Capital Guard Office in the Han Dynasty, and was one of the "four Towns of Anxi" in the Tang Dynasty, which was affiliated to the Anxi Capital Guard Office from the Han to the Tang Dynasty. Pay tribute to China. In the early Song Dynasty, Khotan sent several ambassadors to pay tribute, especially the precious medicinal herb frankincense. Khotan was destroyed by the Qarakhanids in about the third year of Jingde (1006) [4].

The Chinese calligraphy works of Han Dynasty and the Chinese calligraphy works of Song Dynasty can be reflected by their historical background. If a country controls the border area deeply enough, the information gap in the border area will become smaller, and the Chinese calligraphy works will be more biased toward the central Plains.

### 3. How can Dunhuang calligraphy art further explore Chinese history

Because Dunhuang is located in the northwest region, far away from the Central Plains, it was not influenced by later generations. The writing and calligraphy works over there can actually be regarded as a more classical style of work. Since the Silk Road did not play a very important role after the late Song Dynasty, the earlier works were well preserved in Dunhuang, where the style of the works is more classical. The objects collected there, such as brush works and poetry culture, are also more relevant to the ancient period. Among them, the Tang Dynasty Li Bai's 李白 Jiangjinjiu unearthed in Dunhuang is a very good example.

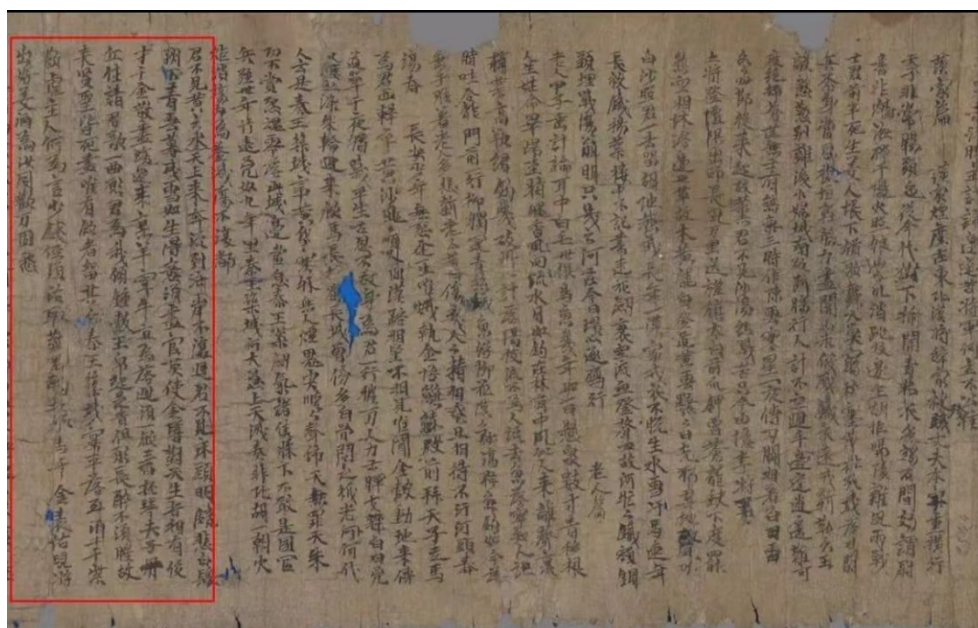


Figure 2: Will enter the wine Dunhuang unearthed version



“君不見，黃河之水天上來，奔流到海不復回。君不見高堂明鏡悲白髮，朝如青絲暮成雪。人生得意須盡歡，莫使金樽空對月。天生我材必有用，千金散盡還復來。烹羊宰牛且為樂，會須一飲三百杯。岑夫子，丹丘生，將進酒，杯莫停。與君歌一曲，請君為我側耳聽。鐘鼓饌玉不足貴，但願長醉不願醒。古來聖賢皆寂寞，惟有飲者留其名。陳王昔時宴平樂，鬥酒十千恣歡謔。主人何為言少錢，徑須沽取對君酌。五花馬，千金裘，呼兒將出換美酒，與爾同銷萬古愁。(Don't you see, the water of the Yellow River comes from the sky and flows to the sea without coming back. You do not see Gao Tang mirror sad white hair, towards such as gray twilight into snow. Life must be happy, do not make the golden bottle empty to the moon. I was born to be useful, the daughter will return. For the pleasure of cooking sheep and slaughtering cows, one must drink three hundred cups. Zen Fu, Dan Chu son, will enter the wine, the cup will not stop. Sing a song with you, please listen to me. Bell and drum dishes are not expensive, I hope long drunk do not want to wake up. All saints of old are lonely, but the drinker keeps his name. In the past, the king of Chen feasted on peace and music, and played with wine. What is the master say little money, the path must be sold to the king. Five-flower horse, Qianjin qiu, call son will be out for wine, with you to sell sorrow. )” [4].

In the poem unearthed from Dunhuang, we found three versions. The first two versions have the same style, with a few handwriting errors, but the third version is quite different from the version that is now widely circulated. First of all, in the third version, the original title recorded above is not jiangjinjiu, but xizunkongh. The name jiangjinjiu came from one of the 18 songs of Yuofu in the Han Dynasty, probably because people in the Song Dynasty changed the name of the poem and added this line. Due to the difference between the capital of the Song Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty, various pronunciations of the characters in the Song Dynasty were changed, so when the Song Dynasty people rearranged the poem, they would modify some of the words and words to achieve the effect of rhyme. During the Song Dynasty, Dunhuang was largely out of the territory of the Song Dynasty, so the extracted version of the poem unearthed in Dunhuang would have greater historical value, and could very well be the same version written by Li Bai 李白 at that time.” Because this song written by Li Bai will enter the wine. More bold, but also more express their own inner thoughts. It is more likely that many changes occurred because of differences in neo-Confucianism in the Song Dynasty. Li Bai's "古來聖賢皆死盡(All sages have died. )" is more in line with his personality, as is his "我輩豈是蓬蒿人. (My generation is not a shaggy people. )" This, the Song people can not. The Song Dynasty was the era of neo-Confucianism, emphasizing reason, respecting sages, saying "古來聖賢皆死盡(All sages have died. )", how proper? Therefore, it is reasonable that the Song people changed this poem [5].

Due to the particularity of Dunhuang's geographical location and as an ancient cultural exchange center. Many brush works are there as the most original works. There will be a better study of ancient Chinese art history.

#### **4. What influence did the calligraphy works left over from Dunhuang have on modern calligraphy**

In 1900, when Wang Yuanlu was working as a Taoist priest in the Mogao Grottoes, he discovered a large number of scriptures and documents in the grottoes. Wang Yuanlu, a Taoist priest, made an important contribution to the record of calligraphy history. Many of the scriptures found in this study were used as important materials for the later study of ancient brush writing. Dunhuang remains, one of the four great discoveries in Chinese academic history in the 20th century, are of great academic value. There are more than 60,000 volumes of the will, with a time span of more than 700 years. From the various periods mentioned above, the style of Dunhuang will be diverse, rich in content and unique

in form. According to statistics, there are about 203 calligraphers with clear signatures, many of them famous calligraphers, such as Cui Shi, Zhang Zhi, Suo Jing and so on. The reappearance of these scriptures provided a model for later generations to learn. In the late Qing Dynasty, due to the corruption and incompetence of the Qing government, the western learning forces constantly impacted China's old learning ideas, but most scholars and scholars were still immersed in the Four Books and the Five Classics, and did not pay attention to the newly unearthed cultural relics in Dunhuang on the western border, nor did they make a correct judgment on their protection, let alone accurately recognize their value [6].

In modern times, it is a special time of cultural alternation. The study of calligraphy in this period appeared in many new areas and combined Western culture with Chinese culture. There are many domestic and foreign researchers personally to Dunhuang to examine the calligraphy works. He is excerpted and studied, and constantly explored. Enrich the research results of Dunhuang. It also made the study of Dunhuang brush characters reach the first climax in history.

China's calligraphy art has a long history, extensive and profound, Dunhuang calligraphy as an important part of the study of Chinese calligraphy history, has an indelible historical value, the Republic of China period can be said to be the first climax of the study of Dunhuang calligraphy, many writers and calligraphies are deeply attracted by this original style of strong style. At the same time, it has also made important contributions to the development of "Dunhuang calligraphy" in practice, and promoted the innovation and development of calligraphy style [6].

In the 1920s and 1930s. Dunhuang scholars continuously improve the data of calligraphy unearthed in Dunhuang. The Dunhuang Academy of Arts, established after 1944, has also done more research on Dunhuang calligraphy. After the 1950s, the study of calligraphy in Dunhuang carried out a vigorous development. And in China, for. The protection of cultural relics has also been improved. In Dunhuang, through the efforts of generation after generation, Dunhuang has received a lot of protection, and the calligraphy of Dunhuang has also been greatly developed during this period.

Jao Tsung-i (August 9, 1917 - February 6, 2018) made outstanding contributions to Dunhuang literature, as well as outstanding achievements in the study and practice of Dunhuang calligraphy. Jao Zongyi is a famous modern historian, litterateur, calligrapher and painter, and also a cultural genius. When he was young, he read and studied under the guidance of his father, and he also laid a good foundation for this. As early as 1961, Mr. Jao wrote an article titled "Calligraphy of Dunhuang Manuscripts", which was subsequently published in 1985 in the "Dunhuang Calligraphy Series" (29 volumes), edited by the Niagen Society of Japan. In each volume, Mr. Jao describes in exquisite and elegant language the artistic value of Dunhuang calligraphy and the artistic styles of various eras. It also provides more comprehensive and systematic learning resources for future generations, and promotes people's understanding and learning of Dunhuang calligraphy [6].

In terms of calligraphy, a lot of Dunhuang calligraphy works have been unearthed, and calligraphers have studied Dunhuang in many ways, such as studying the inscriptions and scriptures developed in Dunhuang. Moreover, many characteristic calligraphic forms and calligraphic fonts only existed in ancient times have been discovered, which has a greater influence on the teaching of calligraphy works in the present and future. With the efforts of modern calligraphers, Chinese calligraphy has been infused with new content.

With the development of The Times, the 21st century has opened a new chapter, more and more people are attracted by the unique charm and artistic value of Dunhuang calligraphy, and many outstanding leaders have emerged in both the theory of Dunhuang documents and calligraphy creation [6]. The inscriptions and brushstrokes excavated in Dunhuang have promoted the teaching of brushstrokes and the content of calligraphy to a certain extent, and the more ancient brushstrokes writing forms and usages developed in Dunhuang have also made the brushstrokes more inclined to the ancient style and better publicize the traditional Chinese culture.

## 5. Conclusion

Dunhuang is an important town connecting the Western regions and the ancient Kings of the Central Plains Dynasty. It is full of records of the Western regions and many brushstrokes. These records and brushstrokes can be used as a very good data for studying the history of Dunhuang and connecting the history of the Central Plains through the history of Dunhuang. . Dunhuang's special geographical location and its rich historical background make it a city of great research significance. Nowadays, more and more attention is paid to calligraphy works and poetry culture, which also brings new opportunities for the development of Dunhuang. We should take more ways to build on existing research data, promote the study of Dunhuang poetry and calligraphy, and constantly refine and understand the deeper aspects of history.

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