Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636. Attributed)

[Four Tang Poems on Morning Court Audience]

[唐早朝詩四首]

[*Tang zaochao shi si shou*]

Calligraphy in running script

Handscroll, ink on paper mounted on silk, 49.4 cm x 1727.2 cm (scroll sheet), 47.8 cm x 1328.7 cm (calligraphy)

Dated 1631

The Mactaggart Art Collection. Access #: 2004.19.20

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ARTIST’S COLOPHON & SIGNATURE

(4 columns in running script, dated August 1631)

In the year of *xin wei*, autumn /, the seventh lunar month*,* written / in the Rhyme House / [by] Dong Qichang.

辛未秋/七月書/於韻樓/董其昌

ARTIST’S SEALS

*Xuan shang zhai* 玄賞齋, tall rectangular relief

*Dong yin Qichang* 董印/其昌, square intaglio

*Zongbo zhi zhang* 宗伯/之章, square intaglio

POEMS

(82 columns in running script)

[岑參，奉和中書舍人賈至早朝大明宮]

鷄鳴紫/陌曙光/寒，鶯/囀皇州/春色闌。/金闕曉/鐘開萬/戶，玉階/僲仗/擁千官。/花迎劒/珮星初/落，柳/拂旌/旂露未/乾。獨有/鳳皇池/上客，陽/春一曲/和皆難。/

[王維，敕借岐王九成宮避暑應教]

帝子/遠辭丹/鳳闕，/天書遙/借翠/微宮。隔/窗雲霧/生衣上，/卷幔山/泉入鏡/中。/林下水/聲喧/語咲，簷/前樹色/隱房櫳/。仙家未/必能勝/此，何/處吹簫/向碧空。/

[王維，奉和聖制從蓬萊向興慶閣道中留春雨中春望之作應制]

渭水自/臨秦塞/曲，黃山/舊繞漢/宮斜。/鑾輿/逈出千/門柳，閣/道迴看/上苑花。/雲裏/帝/城淩鳳/闕，雨中/春樹/萬人家。/為乘陽/氣行時/令，不是/宸遊重物/華。/

[王維，和賈舍人早朝大明宮之作]

絳幘雞/人報曉/籌。尚衣/方進翠/雲裘。九/天閶闔/開宮殿，/萬國衣/冠拜冕/旒。日色纔/臨仙掌/動，香煙/欲傍袞/龍浮。/朝罷須/裁五色/詔，珮/聲歸/向鳳池/頭。

COLLECTORS’ SEALS

Zheng Jinde 鄭晉德 (fl. the late 17th – early 18th centuries)

*Tiandu Zheng Jinde Fanxiu shi jianding* 天都鄭/晉德蕃/修氏鑑定, square intaglio

*Yunge* 韻/閣, square intaglio

*Yunge tushu* 韻閣/圖書, square intaglio, repeated ten times

Zhang Ze 張澤 (1882-1940)

*Shanma* 善/孖, square intaglio

*Huchi xinshang* 虎癡/心賞, square relief

Zhang Daqian 張大千(1899-1983)

*Cang zhi Daqian* 藏之/大千, square intaglio

*Dafengtang zhangwu* 大風堂/長物, tall rectangular relief

Unidentified

*Shaoxi* 紹/熙, square relief

□ *yin Zonglu* □印/宗魯, square intaglio

NOTE

**CALLIGRAPHY** attributed to Dong Qichang (1555-1636), dated 1631, bearing one poem by Cen Shen (715-770) and three by Wang Wei (692-761) on their morning court audiences in 758 with the Suzong emperor of Tang (r. 756-762) during the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763).

The Rhyme House (*Yun lou* 韻樓) mentioned in the artist’s colophon was a property owned by the Cheng 程 family of Xiaogan 孝感 in today’s Hubei Province. Cheng Liangru (1584-1640s) got to know Dong in 1605 in his provincial school of Huguang when Dong inspected it as the Education Intendant.[[1]](#footnote-1) Dong introduced Cheng Liangru to his artistic circle. His friend Wu Zhen 吳楨 (native of She County歙縣; fl. the 17th century) approved Cheng’s encyclopedic commonplace *Dushu kaoding* (1613).[[2]](#footnote-2) About twenty years later, Wu, together with Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639), another friend of Dong’s, prefaced Cheng’s another commonplace *Rugu lueji* (1631-1633).[[3]](#footnote-3) Cheng Liangru’s son, Zhengkui 正揆 (1604-1676; *jinshi* 1631) studied painting and calligraphy under Dong’s supervision. Dong highly praised Zhengkui’s work.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Dong could have presented some calligraphy and paintings to the Chengs, but the creation of this current piece is questionable. The year 1631 was busy for both Dong and the Chengs. Cheng Liangru took the post of the Magistrate of Xingtang 行唐 County (in today’s Hebei Province) in 1628 and two years later transferred to She 涉 County (also in today’s Hebei). He was promoted around 1632 to a secretary in the Ministry of Revenue, supervising the royal granaries in Fengyang until his relief of duty in 1635 because of his failed defense against rebels.[[5]](#footnote-5) In 1631 he remained on his government duties in She County.[[6]](#footnote-6) The same year witnessed Cheng Zhengkui’s success in his metropolitan examination in Beijing where he perhaps continued staying in 1632. On Dong’s side, it was not possible for him to visit the Rhyme House in Hubei. He was travelling in Linping 臨平 (in today’s Hangzhou) in May, sailing in the Tai Lake in June - August, before celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival (10 September 1631) in Nanjing. In December Dong departed for Beijing at the Chongzhen emperor’s (r. 1627-1644) summon to take his reappointment of the Minister of Rites. He arrived in Beijing in May 1632.[[7]](#footnote-7) It was in Beijing that Cheng met his master for the first time in the past several years.[[8]](#footnote-8) No record about this current piece has been found in Cheng Zhengkui’s extant writings, nor his seals on or colophon to this current piece.

The artist’s three seals were rarely used and his signature seems suspicious. The same combination of the three seal legends, as far as we located, appears only on a piece in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Accession # 1989.363.100; after 1632), yet in different sizes and a different style of engraving. The noticeable discrepancies are in the radicals man (*ren* 人) and white (*bai* 白) of the character *bo* 伯, the left part of the character *zhi* 之 in seal script, and the upper part of the character *qi* 其.[[9]](#footnote-9) The square intaglio *Zongbo zhi zhang*, without any broken strokes as in the MMA one, also appears in Japan in a size and style slightly different from that on the Mactaggart piece.[[10]](#footnote-10) In respect of the signature on this piece, the lower part *zhong* 重 of the character *dong* 董 features its first horizontal line (*yi* 一) much shorter than that in his stylized signature.

Compared with genuine pieces by Dong, however, this current piece represents some characteristics of his calligraphy style, specifically the structure of some characters and his way of writing them. Characters such as *xing* 行 (walk), *zhang* 掌 (palm, or control), *yang* 陽 (sun), *he* 何 (what), *yi* 衣 (cloth), *sheng* 聲 (voice, sound), and *tou* 頭 (head) in this piece were written in the same style in his handscroll *Singing Aloud* (*Fangge xing* 放歌行, ca. 1630. Shanghai Museum).[[11]](#footnote-11) Meanwhile, the last vertical lines (*gun* 丨) of the characters *xian* 僲 (immortal), *liu* 柳 (willow), *cui* 翠 (green), *zhong* 中 (middle), *sheng* 聲, *xia* 斜 (slanting), *di* 帝 (emperor) and *hua* 華 (luxury) obviously resulted from his imitation of Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107) , as his scroll of the *Rhapsody on the Celestial Horse* (*Tianma fu* 天馬賦, dated 1612. Shanghai Museum) shows.[[12]](#footnote-12) In calligraphy, Dong said, “No vertically descending stroke can be completed without an upturned movement at the end of the stroke” by running brush with its tip concealed and slightly pressed.[[13]](#footnote-13) Yet such upturned vertical lines mainly appear in his imitations of Mi Fu. In his own creations, especially in those he composed in the 1630s, the vertical line tends to end with a sharp point by running brush with its healthy tip exposed. Some of the above typical features of Dong’s calligraphy could convince Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) and his brother Zhang Ze (1882-1940) of this piece’s authenticity, but its production cannot be historically verified. It could be an imitation of Dong by a competitive seventeenth-century calligrapher who knew Dong’s modeling after Mi.

Zheng Jinde (fl. the late 17th – early 18th centuries, native of She County 歙縣) was the first identified owner of this current piece. He was a poet, though later better known for inventing the Three Kingdoms chess (*san you qi* 三友棋).[[14]](#footnote-14) He could know about the Chengs’ and Dong’s artistic networks in his home county, which made him to treat this piece as genuine by stamping one of his seals ten times.

Forgeries of Dong’s calligraphy, most of which were imitations and ghostwriting, had been common in his life, and sometime he even tacitly approved outstanding fakes as his own works.[[15]](#footnote-15) Textually, this current imitation was made possible as Dong indeed created a couple of pieces bearing some of the four poems transcribed above, with seals affixed different from those on this piece. The last poem by Wang Wei, together with one by Jia Zhi 賈至 (718-772), appeared in a piece that Dong created in 1625.[[16]](#footnote-16) The same poem, with one by Du Fu (712-770), was written in regular script in a piece that was conserved in the Qing court (now in the National Palace Museum in Teibei. Access # Gu-shu-000128-00000).[[17]](#footnote-17) As he said in his colophons to these two pieces, Dong knew well the set of poems on the morning audiences in 758 with the Suzong emperor.

Morning audiences were expected and emphasized, not only in terms of court ritual, but in order to ensure the daily administrative collaboration and communication between the emperor and his ministers. Dong experienced the Wanli emperor’s (r. 1572-1620) absence from court audiences. It was reasonable for him to expect regular meetings with the Tianqi emperor (r. 1620-1627), who appointed him the Minister of Rites in Nanjing in 1625, and with the Chongzhen emperor, who reappointed him the same title in Beijing in the winter of 1631. In his pieces, Dong actually conveyed the concern and expectation that had lingered in court officials’ minds for nearly one thousand years and that was about to continue into the nineteenth century.

REFRENCE MATTER

Cheng Liangru 程良孺, 1613. *Dushu kaoding* 讀書攷定. Xiaogan: Yun lou. Reproduced in SKCM.

---, 1633. *Rugu lue ji* 茹古略集. Xiaogan: Yun lou. Reproduced in SKCM.

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(Lianbin Dai; updated 25 July 25, 2016)

1. Tu Daoyong 屠道鏞, 1883, 14:7b; For Cheng Liangru's year of birth, see Cheng Zhengkui, “Daren qiyue chudu weishou bashou” 大人七月初度為壽八首, in Cheng Zhengkui 1696, 9:1a–2b. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cheng Liangru 1613. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cheng Liangru 1633. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Wang Shiqing 1992, 481; Dong Qichang, “Ba Cheng Taishi shu Jiuge” 跋程太史書九歌 and "You ba Cheng Duanbo shu" 又跋程端伯書, in Dong Qichang 1968, "Rongtai bieji" 容臺別集, chap. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Tu Daoyong 1883, 14:7b–8a. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cheng Liangru 1633, “Zixu” 自敍 that he wrote in his magistrate's office. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Zheng Wei 1989, 201–207. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cheng Zhengkui, “Shu Wang Mojie Jianggan xueji juan hou” 書王摩詰江干雪霽卷後, in Cheng 1696, 23:3a–4a. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Riely 1992, 303 for the three seals; Ho 1992, 238 pl. 65 for the MMA piece. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Saitō Ken 2003, 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ho 1992, II:233–235. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid., II:208–211. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cited in Xu Bangda 1992, 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Liu Dakui 1771, 14:25a; Zheng Jinde ca. 1700. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Xu Bangda 1992, 123–127; Qi Gong, “Dong Qichang shuhua dabi ren kao” 董其昌書畫代筆人考, in Qi Gong 2010, III:108–120. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Pei Boqian 1937, 12:20b–21b. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Guoli Gugong Bowuyuan 1965, 1.138. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)