

# A Comparative Study of Brushwork: Emperor Huizong's Slender Gold Style in the 'Thousand Character Classic' versus Chu Suiliang's 'Large Character Yin Fu Jing'

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## **Abstract:**

Although Emperor Huizong's Slender Gold Style and Chu Suiliang's 'Yin Fu Jing' share a same aesthetics of forceful and leanness, they exhibit significant differences in brushwork expression. This study, through comparative analysis and the methods of formal analysis, focuses on the three core stages of stroke execution - stroke onset, mid-stroke movement, and closure - to explore differences in brushwork expression and their underlying aesthetic orientations. In the onset stage, the Slender Gold Style is characterized by a formulaic slanted-tip cutting entry, emphasizing uniformity. In contrast, Chu's script employs a diverse repertoire of techniques, including exposed-tip, hidden-tip, and connecting-tip onsets, displaying rich variation. During the mid-stroke stage, the square, sharp turns of the Slender Gold Style contrast greatly to the rounded, lively turns of Chu's script. In the closure stage, the Slender Gold Style's 'willow-leaf press' and sharp hooks are highly decorative, whereas Chu's script shows an organic, natural closure. Ultimately, these distinct brushwork techniques reflect profound differences in artistic pursuits: the Slender Gold Style, with its formulation and visual impact, epitomizes the Song Dynasty's ideal of 'prioritizing personal expression' (Shangyi); Chu's script, through its emphasis on spontaneous generation and coherent vitality (Qiyun), embodies a perfect fusion of disciplined structure and dynamic spirit of Tang Dynasty regular script.

**Keywords:** Slender Gold Style; Yin Fu Jing; Brushwork Comparison; Aesthetic Differences; Artistic Expression

## Part One: Origins

### 1. Research Backgrounds

As a representative work of Chu Suiliang's later years, the *Large Character Yin Fu Jing* holds a pivotal role in the history of Tang Dynasty calligraphy, connecting the past legacy with the future. This masterpiece strictly follows the rigorous rules of Tang Kai (Regular Script), with tight central structures (zhonggong) and clear brush movement, showcasing the essence of Tang's ideal 'Emphasis on Rules' (Shangfa). At the same time, it incorporates the archaic flavor of Clerical Script (Lishu) and the flowing, connected motion of Running Script (Xingshu). Within this standardized framework of rules, Chu created a unique personal style. This breakthrough not only demonstrates his profound traditional mastery but also highlights his exceptional artistic creativity, signaling the maturation of Tang Kai from strict adherence to rules towards lyrical expressiveness. The influence of the *Large Character Yin Fu Jing* has been not only profound but enduring. Masters from the Song Dynasty Mi Fu to the Yuan Dynasty Zhao Mengfu all drew inspiration from it. Even today, it remains a classic for Regular Script calligraphy learner.

The Slender Gold Style (Shoujinti), created by Emperor Huizong of Song (Zhao Ji), stands as one of the most distinctive styles in the Chinese calligraphy history. It constituted a radical departure from the paradigm of traditional Regular Script, challenging conventional brushwork norms and principles of balance. It represents an ultimate expression of the Song Dynasty's 'Emphasis on Personal Expression' (Shangyi), as the early Ming scholar Tao Zongyi noted: 'It cannot be sought through old traces'. The *Thousand Character Classic*, as a representative work of the Slender Gold Style, perfectly demonstrates its unique aesthetic of slender strength, upright posture, and unrestrained sharpness. Although its distinctive style made it difficult to be inherited widely, the Slender Gold Style has left an indelible mark on Chinese calligraphic history with its artistic individuality.

It is noteworthy that these two masterpieces from different eras share a fascinating connection. Superficially, both exhibit forceful, lean, and upright linear characteristics, as well as open and spacious spatial composition. This visual similarity often invites comparison. More importantly, tracing the lineage of calligraphic history reveals a profound internal link between them.

Specifically, Chu Suiliang's late work, the *Large Character Yin Fu Jing*, pioneered a fusion of Tang Kai discipline, the archaic taste of Clerical Script, and the fluidity of Running Script. This created a style distinct from Ouyang Xun's severity and Yan Zhenqing's monumental solidity -

a style that was 'forceful and lean' yet retained resilience. This style was inherited and developed by Chu's nephew, Xue Ji. Building upon the lean characteristics of Chu's script, Xue Ji further intensified a sense of precariousness in structure, deliberately breaking balance and employing slanted brush momentum to create dynamic tension. In his representative work, the Nirvana Sutra, the lines become even finer and the brush tip sharper than in Chu's style. The slight hook and curve in vertical strokes, in particular, faintly prefigure the features of the later Slender Gold Style. Xue Yao, a cousin of Xue Ji, pushed the 'forceful and lean' characteristics to new extremes. In his masterpiece, the Poem on a Summer Excursion to the Shichong River and Preface, the brushwork is strikingly sharp and exposed. Elements such as the right-angled hooks at the end of horizontal strokes, the 'nail-head' (dingtou) beginnings of vertical strokes, and the knife-cut terminations of press strokes are almost identical to those in the Slender Gold Style. Consequently, this work is widely regarded by later scholars as the direct precursor to the Slender Gold Style.

As for Emperor Huizong's own training in earlier calligraphy, Song Dynasty records clearly document that he initially studied Huang Tingjian before turning to the styles of Xue Ji and Xue Yao. He did not merely imitate these predecessors but engaged in a highly creative transformation. He integrated the meticulous brush techniques of court painting into calligraphy, endowing the Slender Gold Style with an unprecedented decorative quality. In terms of brushwork, he pushed Xue Yao's 'iron strokes and silver hooks' to an extreme: the hooks at the end of horizontal strokes became more pronounced, and the pauses and transitions in vertical strokes were exaggerated into prominent 'crane's knee' (xizi) effects. Structurally, he dramatically elongated the vertical strokes, making the character forms more slender and creating intense visual tension. This was not merely a technical innovation but a breakthrough in aesthetic conception. The forceful and lean style initiated by Chu Suiliang, transmitted through intermediaries like Xue Ji and Xue Yao, finally matured and crystallized under Emperor Huizong, leading the Qing scholar Yang Shoujing to designate Chu Suiliang as the 'Ancestor of the Slender Gold Style.'

It is exactly based on this historical continuity of artistic features and their visual similarities that a systematic comparative study of Chu Suiliang's *Yin Fu Jing* and Emperor Huizong's Slender Gold Style holds particular significance. By comparing their brushwork characteristics, we can not only trace the development trajectory of this unique 'forceful and lean' style from the Tang to the Song Dynasty but also, through their specific technical differences, reveal the divergent aesthetic orientations they

reflect. These aesthetic differences stem from the broader shifts in artistic conception between the Tang and Song eras, as well as from the unique personal artistic pursuits of the calligraphers themselves. This study allows for a deeper understanding of the internal logic of calligraphic style evolution and how masters achieve individualized artistic breakthroughs while building upon tradition.

## 2. Research Methodology

This study employs the ‘formal analysis’ method proposed by Qiu Zhenzhong as its core research method. Utilizing a horizontal comparison, it focuses on examining the differences in the three key stages of brush movement - stroke onset, mid-stroke movement, and stroke closure - between Chu Suiliang’s *Yin Fu Jing* and Emperor Huizong’s *Slender Gold Style*. Formal analysis concentrates on readily observable visual elements like brushwork and structure, thereby translating abstract calligraphic aesthetics into concrete technical language and making stylistic comparison operable. This research also provides a practical

case study at the methodological level for the study of calligraphic brushwork.

## Part 2: Brushwork Comparison

### 1. Onset

The brush onset methods in Chu Suiliang’s *Large Character Yin Fu Jing* and Emperor Huizong’s *Slender Gold Style Thousand Character Classic* present a striking contrast. Chu’s script exhibits a rich variety of onset techniques, whereas the *Slender Gold Style* is predominantly characterized by a highly stylized exposed-tip onset.

#### 1.1 Exposed-Tip Onset

As the term suggests, the exposed-tip onset refers to a method where the brush tip is directly revealed at the beginning of a stroke, creating a visual effect that is crisp, decisive, and sharply pointed.

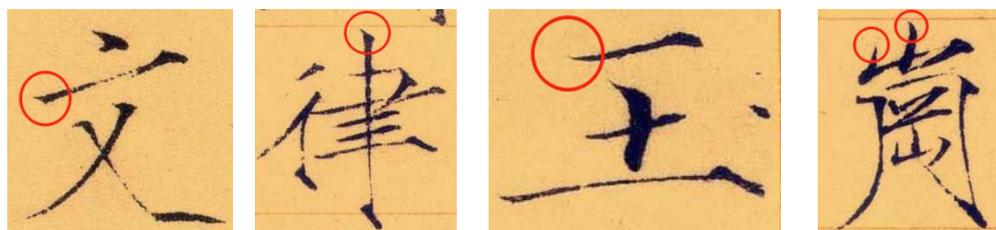


**Figure 1: Examples of characters ‘天’, ‘上’, ‘生’, ‘入’, and ‘之’ from the *Yin Fu Jing*.**

In Chu Suiliang’s *Large Character Yin Fu Jing*, the skilled application of the exposed-tip onset is evident across all stroke types. In Figure 1, the horizontal stroke in the character ‘天’ (tian) clearly shows the brush tip pressing in naturally and directly from the upper-left to the lower-right, revealing a sharp wedge shape at the very start. The vertical stroke in ‘上’ (shang) similarly exhibits a diagonal cut from the upper-left to the lower-right, presenting a sharp triangular onset silhouette. The same principle applies to the left-falling stroke in ‘生’ (sheng), the right-falling stroke in ‘入’ (ren) (though partially obscured by the left-falling stroke), and the dot stroke in ‘之’ (zhi), collectively demonstrating Chu Suiliang’s mastery

of the exposed-tip technique.

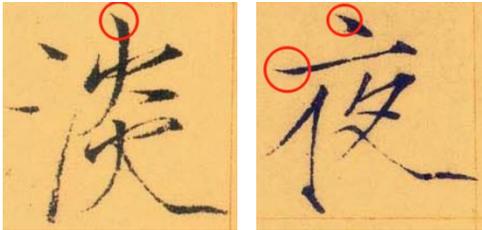
The *Slender Gold Style*, known for its formulation or stylization, employs an exposed-tip onset for almost all strokes, regardless of type. As seen in Figure 2, for both horizontal and vertical strokes - whether it’s the slanted-brush cutting entry seen in the horizontal stroke of ‘文’ (wen) and the vertical stroke of ‘律’ (lü), which presents a sharp cut surface, or the straightforward brush-tip onset seen in the first horizontal stroke of ‘王’ (wang) and the two verticals in ‘嵐’ (lan), where the starting point is somewhat rounder compared to the slanted-brush entry - the sharp, unmistakable brush tip is clearly visible at the point of contact.



**Figure 2: Examples of characters ‘文’, ‘律’, ‘王’, and ‘嵐’ from the *Thousand Character Classic*.**

Furthermore, other strokes, such as the left-falling stroke in ‘淡’ (dan) and the right-falling and dot strokes in ‘夜’

(ye) shown in Figure 3, also predominantly use an exposed-tip onset.



**Figure 3: Examples of characters ‘淡’ and ‘夜’ from the *Thousand Character Classic*.**

### 1.2 Hidden-Tip Onset

The hidden-tip onset is the counterpart to the exposed-tip onset. Its characteristic lies in concealing the trace of the brush tip within the body of the stroke at the beginning, achieved through reverse brush movements such as ‘intending to go right, first go left; intending to go down, first

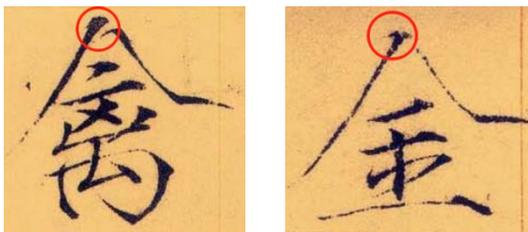
go up.’ This results in a rounded and reserved visual effect at the stroke’s origin.

In the Large Character Yin Fu Jing, Chu Suiliang’s use of the hidden-tip onset similarly demonstrates superb skill. In Figure 4, the first horizontal stroke of the character ‘其’ (qi) shows the brush first making a short reverse movement to the left before turning and proceeding rightward, forming a rounded ‘silkworm head’ at the onset, reminiscent of Clerical Script flavor. The central vertical stroke in ‘书’ (shu) involves a slight lift upwards before pressing down and turning the brush, creating an arc-shaped onset contour. The same principle applies to the left-falling stroke in ‘人’ (ren) and the right-falling stroke in ‘杀’ (sha) in the same figure; the former moves briefly upper-right before turning lower-left, and the latter moves upper-left before turning lower-right. Their onsets are thick and rounded, forming a sharp contrast with the sharpness of exposed-tip onsets.



**Figure 4: Examples of characters ‘其’, ‘书’, ‘人’, and ‘杀’ from the *Yin Fu Jing*.**

In contrast, the hidden-tip onset is relatively rare within the highly stylized system of the Slender Gold Style, found mainly in left-falling strokes. As seen in Figure 5, in characters like ‘禽’ (qin) and ‘金’ (jin), the brush first descends to the lower-right before turning to the lower-left. Even so, the fine, sharp brush tip before the turn remains clearly visible, consistent with the Slender Gold Style’s characteristic sharpness.



**Figure 5: Examples of characters ‘禽’ and ‘金’ from the *Thousand Character Classic*.**

### 1.3 Connecting-Tip Onset

Beyond the two broad categories of hidden-tip and exposed-tip onsets, the Large Character Yin Fu Jing also contains instances of the connecting-tip onset. This technique inherits the momentum from the preceding stroke,

emphasizing the responsive relationship - ‘the brush breaks but the intention connects’ - between strokes within a character. In Figure 6, the onset of the horizontal stroke in the character ‘之’ (zhi) is a prime example. It follows the concluding momentum of the preceding dot stroke, with the brush landing from the upper-right (the direction of the dot’s end) and naturally transitioning rightward. In the character ‘贼’ (zei), the onset of the slanting hook continues the momentum from the left-falling stroke below it; the brush lands from the lower-left before naturally descending, forming a natural, curved turn at the onset.

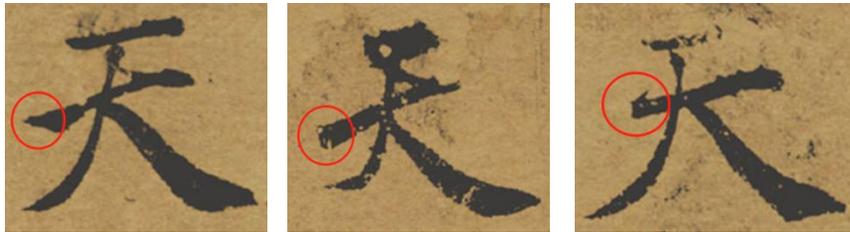


**Figure 6: Examples of characters ‘之’ and ‘贼’ from the *Yin Fu Jing*.**

It is noteworthy that Chu Suiliang’s application of these three onset methods - exposed-tip, hidden-tip, and connecting-tip - was by no means a fixed, stylized pattern.

Instead, he adapted flexibly according to the needs of the character's posture. Taking the character '天' (tian) as an example, its second horizontal stroke exhibits rich variation across different instances: sometimes it employs a sharp exposed-tip onset, reaving its cutting edge; other times it uses a reserved hidden-tip onset, appearing solid and full; and occasionally, it cleverly inherits the momen-

tum of the first horizontal stroke, utilizing a connecting-tip onset to achieve a natural transition. This 'variation based on the character' approach reflects what later scholars like Bai would describe as a philosophy of 'following the momentum, where spontaneous, natural brush movement takes precedence over formulaic execution, thereby infusing each character with unique vitality.



**Figure 7: Three different examples of the character '天' from the *Yin Fu Jing*.**

Conversely, while there are no repeated characters in Emperor Huizong's Slender Gold Style *Thousand Character Classic* for direct comparison, a horizontal comparison of the same stroke types across different characters clearly reveals its strict regularity. This stands in sharp contrast to the rich and varied onsets found in Chu Suiliang's *Yin Fu Jing*. Whether it is the prevalent exposed-tip or the rarer hidden-tip onset, they consistently follow a landing direction from the upper-left to the lower-right. This uniformity creates a powerful sense of visual order.

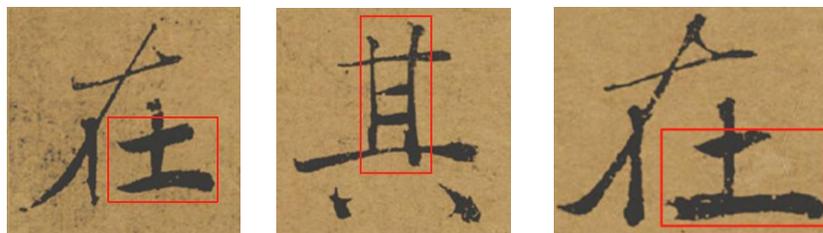
## 2. Mid-Stroke Movement

### 2.1 Mid-Stroke Execution

The mid-stroke execution in Chu Suiliang's *Large Character Yin Fu Jing* is flexible and varied. Changes in thick-

ness and inclination are dynamic and seemingly spontaneous. Taking the two horizontal strokes at the bottom of the character '在' (zai) in Figure 8 as an example: the first horizontal extends steadily towards the upper-right with consistent thickness and angle, while the second transitions from thin to thick and exhibits a slight arch, rising first before descending. The same principle applies to other strokes. For instance, in the two vertical strokes of the character '其' (qi) in the same figure, the left one is relatively straight and transitions from thin to thick, while the right one maintains a more stable thickness but curves slightly to the left.

Variations even exist between occurrences of the same character. Comparing the two horizontals in the second instance of '在' in Figure 8 with the first, the first horizontal clearly exhibits a change from thick to thin, and the second horizontal lacks the arched curvature, appearing straighter.



**Figure 8: Characters '在', '其', and another '在' from the *Yin Fu Jing*.**

In contrast, the brush movement in the mid-stroke phase of the Slender Gold Style *Thousand Character Classic* follows a fixed pattern. Using the horizontal stroke as an example: after the onset, the stroke begins at its thickest and then tapers gradually towards the conclusion. The two horizontal strokes in the characters '千' (qian) and '天' (tian) in Figure 9 are extremely similar in pattern. Similarly, the right-falling press stroke, as seen in '天' and '致' (zhi) in the same figure, follows a fixed pattern: after on-

set, it transitions from thick to thin before being pulled out to form the stroke's conclusion. Furthermore, due to the inherently finer lines of the style, the variation in stroke thickness in the *Slender Gold Style Thousand Character Classic* is far less pronounced than in Chu Suiliang's *Large Character Yin Fu Jing*.

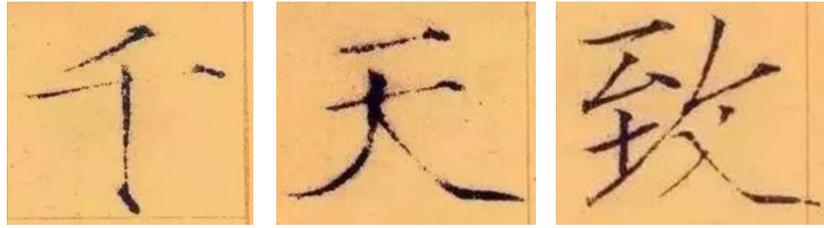


Figure 9: Characters ‘千’, ‘天’, and ‘致’ from the *Thousand Character Classic*.

## 2.2 Turning Strokes

The turning strokes in Chu Suiliang’s Large Character Yin Fu Jing are characterized by rounded, subtle transitions. The brush maintains a continuous adjustment of the tip during the turn; while the change in brush orientation is discernible, it is never emphatically accentuated. For example, in the horizontal-then-vertical turn in the right part of the character ‘神’ (shen) in Figure 10, one can observe a very natural turning of the brush, without excessive pressure or any attempt to create a sharp angle, resulting in a gentle, curved outer contour. Similarly, in the turn in the right part of the character ‘物’ (wu) in the same figure, the line thickness remains remarkably consistent throughout the entire turning process, with only a subtle trace of the brush turning visible, creating a very rounded and integrated effect.



Figure 10: Characters ‘神’ and ‘物’ from the *Large Character Yin Fu Jing*.

As for the turning strokes in the Slender Gold Style Thousand Character Classic, they maintain their consistent stylization. Common horizontal-then-vertical turns, as seen in the characters ‘宿’ (su) and ‘盈’ (ying) in Figure 11, follow this pattern: when the brush reaches the end of the horizontal segment, the tip is almost completely lifted, making the line its finest. At the turning point, pressure is applied forcefully from the upper-left to the lower-right, forming a distinct inverted triangle, before the brush resumes normal movement to the lower-left. This treatment deliberately accentuates the turn through extreme contrast in thickness, creating a stark contrast with Chu’s style. Another common turn, the horizontal-then-hook, follows suit. As seen in the first stroke of ‘宿’ in Figure 11, during the turn, pressure is applied with the slanted brush,

creating a strong contrast between the thin line at the very end of the horizontal and the solid surface scraped out by the slanted brush after the turn, making the sharpness highly conspicuous.

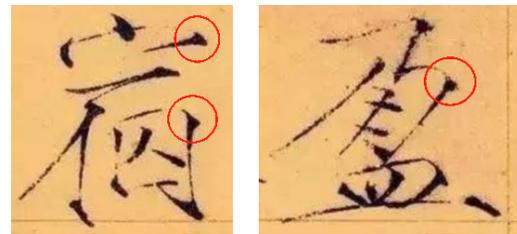


Figure 11: Characters ‘盈’ and ‘宿’ from the *Thousand Character Classic*.

## 3. Closure

### 3.1 Horizontal and Vertical Strokes

The methods of stroke closure in Chu Suiliang’s Large Character Yin Fu Jing remain diverse, perfectly reflecting his synthesis of Clerical and Regular Script forms. In Figure 12, taking the closure of horizontal strokes as an example, common forms include: 1) Kai-style pause closure: The first horizontal in ‘覆’ (fu), where the brush is pressed lightly to the lower-right before being lifted back towards the upper-left to conclude, forming a distinct ‘pause’ (dun), typical of Tang Kai rules. 2) Li-style flat exit: The last horizontal in ‘星’ (xing), where the brush is directly lifted to the left at the end, forming a cut-off end, possessing a distinct Clerical Script flavor. Closures of vertical strokes also show much variation: 1) Exposed-tip lift: The main vertical in ‘神’ (shen), where the brush is naturally lifted at the endpoint, creating a short taper from thick to thinnest. 2) Li-style hidden-tip: The long vertical on the right of ‘邪’ (xie), where the brush is slightly turned back upon closure, forming a blunt, cut-off end. A variation of this turning-back method, involving a slight upward flick before pressing down, results in a drop-let-like termination, as seen in the long vertical on the left of ‘邪’, which already hints at the prototype of the later Slender Gold Style’s ‘nail head’ (dingtou).



Figure 12: Characters ‘覆’, ‘星’, ‘神’, and ‘邪’ from the *Yin Fu Jing*.

The stroke closure in Emperor Huizong’s *Thousand Character Classic* strictly adheres to its formula. The closure of horizontal strokes is largely uniform: when the brush reaches the end, it is lifted lightly, moved back towards the upper-left to cover part of the stroke body, then the belly of the brush is pressed down to the lower-right to create a rounded pause, before being lifted and retrieved. The two horizontal strokes in the character ‘天’ (tian) in

Figure 13 are almost identical in their closure. The closure of vertical strokes is uniformly executed by lightly lifting the brush at the endpoint, turning it back to the upper-left to cover, then pressing down to the lower-right to form a pause, and finally retrieving it, resulting in the characteristic ‘nail head’ form. This applies to both ‘hanging needle’ verticals as in ‘帝’ (di) and ‘dewdrop’ verticals as in ‘官’ (guan) in Figure 13.

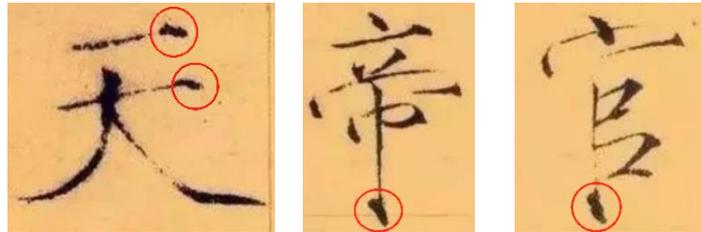


Figure 13: Characters ‘天’, ‘帝’, and ‘官’ from the *Thousand Character Classic*.

### 3.2 Special Forms: Press Strokes and Hooks

The closure of the press stroke in Chu Suiliang’s *Large Character Yin Fu Jing* varies according to the character’s posture, exhibiting characteristics of both Clerical and Regular Scripts. For example, in the characters ‘之’ (zhi) and ‘天’ (tian) in Figure 14, the press stroke concludes with an upward flick, revealing the tip in a ‘wild goose tail’ (yanwei) form, with an expansive momentum that carries a clear Clerical Script resonance. In the character ‘人’ (ren), however, the press stroke concludes with a pronounced heavy press followed by a level exit, resulting

in a full, heavy triangular form, more akin to the mature Tang Kai style compared to the previous two examples. In contrast, the press stroke in the *Slender Gold Style* remains highly stylized: nearing the end, the brush pauses briefly, transitions from a centered tip in the mid-section to a slanted tip, then presses down to the right to create a thicker, block-like area, before finally being lifted to ‘pop out’ a sharp tip. The only slight variation between different characters lies in the length of this blocky section. The final phase of the last press stroke in the characters ‘秋’ (qiu) and ‘收’ (shou) in Figure 14 is almost identical.

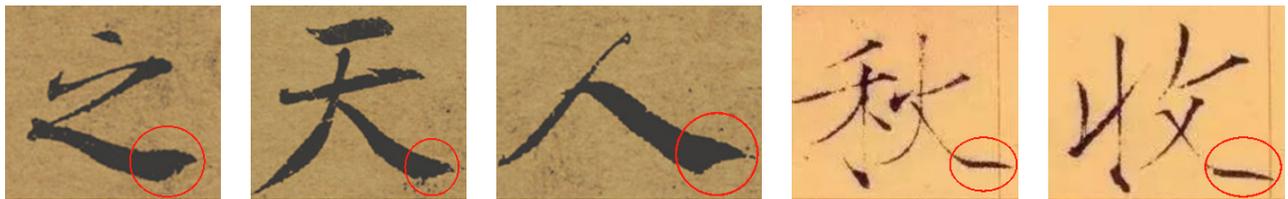


Figure 14: Characters ‘之’, ‘天’, ‘人’ from the *Yin Fu Jing* and ‘秋’, ‘收’ from the *Slender Gold Style*.

Regarding the closure of the hook stroke in both works, Chu’s script again demonstrates variability, while the *Slender Gold Style* is highly formulaic. In the *Large Character Yin Fu Jing*, the hook stroke sometimes leans towards a Kai style, as in the character ‘萬’ (wan) in Figure 15, where it is executed with a pause followed by a

lift, making it short and forceful. At other times, it shows hints of Running Script, as in the character ‘万’ (wan) in the same figure, where the brush turns naturally and then flicks out the hook by skimming the paper. The angle of the hook also varies greatly according to the character’s posture; the hook in ‘萬’ is noticeably flatter than that in

‘万’。The execution of hooks in the Slender Gold Style largely follows this method: after reaching the end of the stroke, the brush pauses and pressure is applied to the tip, then a small, slightly curved hook is flicked out towards the upper-left. Even the angles of hooks for the same

stroke type are extremely similar. For instance, in the vertical hooks of the characters ‘秋’ (qiu) and ‘珠’ (zhu) in Figure 15, not only is the execution method identical, but the angles are also very consistent.

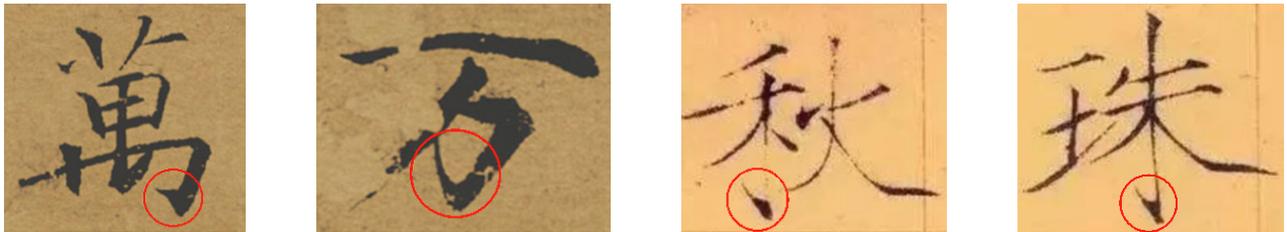


Figure 15: Characters ‘萬’, ‘万’ from the *Yin Fu Jing* and ‘秋’, ‘珠’ from the *Slender Gold Style*.

## 4. Space, Rhythm and Texture

### 4.1 Spatial Composition

The spatial composition of Chu Suiliang’s Large Character *Yin Fu Jing* exhibits characteristics typical of Tang Dynasty regular script (Kai Shu). The internal space within each character is evenly distributed, with the central region (zhonggong) remaining moderately compact without deliberate constriction. In contrast, Emperor Hui-zong’s Slender Gold Style Thousand Character Classic, as analyzed by Harrist in the context of calligraphy’s visual impact, favors extreme spatial contrasts to create a powerful visual impact. As shown in Figure 16, comparing the same character ‘有’ (you), the left-falling stroke in

Chu’s style is more expansive, stretching leftward, resulting in a balanced overall form. In the Slender Gold Style, however, the same stroke elongates noticeably downward, drawing closer to the ‘月’ component below, achieving a much tighter central region. Furthermore, the extension of primary strokes in Chu’s style appears more natural, always conditional upon maintaining the character’s overall equilibrium. In the Slender Gold Style Thousand Character Classic, the extension of primary strokes is deliberately intensified. For example, in the character ‘宇’ (yu), the main vertical hook is conspicuously and exaggeratedly elongated in the Slender Gold Style, whereas Chu Suiliang maintains its proportion within the character’s overall balance.



Figure 16: Comparison of characters ‘有’ and ‘宇’ from the *Yin Fu Jing* and the *Thousand Character Classic*.

Regarding the relationship between characters, the spatial arrangement between characters in the Large Character *Yin Fu Jing* (Figure 17, left) is relatively airy and loose. The flow of the line (hangqi) is maintained primarily through the mutual responsiveness of brush momentum, without the use of a strict grid or axial alignment; yet, the

columns, rows, and character sizes achieve a natural neatness. The layout of the Thousand Character Classic (Figure 17, right), however, is strictly regulated by a grid. Despite the uniform character size, the distance between characters is more compact.

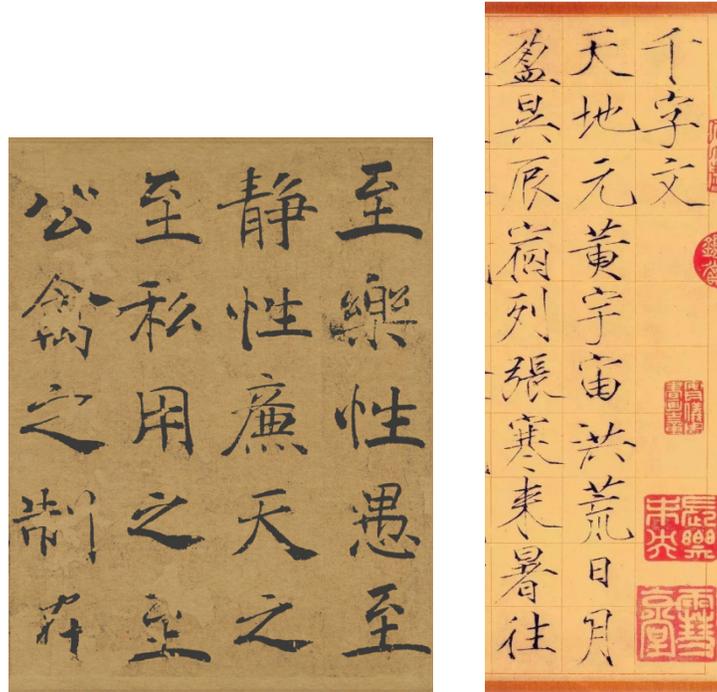


Figure 17: Spatial composition in the *Yin Fu Jing* (left) and the *Slender Gold Style* (right).

#### 4.2 Connectivity and Responsiveness

The connectivity in Chu Suiliang's Large Character *Yin Fu Jing* is primarily achieved through 'continuity of brush momentum'. This means that the conclusion of one stroke indicate the direction of the next, preserving a 'connection where the intention arrives but the brush does not'-a void connection. The following stroke then initiates in response. For example, in the two left-falling strokes on the right side of the character '物' (wu) in Figure 18, the first stroke does not conclude by lifting directly to the lower-left, but rather turns back towards the upper-right, indicating the starting point of the second stroke. Before the onset of the second stroke, a fine thread-like line runs from the lower-left to the upper-right. The two strokes are not physically connected but appear linked. Another example is the second horizontal stroke in the character '天' (tian) in Figure 18. Its onset, using a hidden-tip method moving left-then-right, directly inherit the directional mo-

mentum from the conclusion of the first horizontal stroke. Its closure, in turn, moves right-then-left with a turning back of the brush, connecting momentum-wise to the subsequent left-falling stroke.

The handling of connectivity in the *Slender Gold Style* Thousand Character Classic can be summarized by the term 'linking threads'. There is a profuse use of tangible, hair-thin connecting lines between strokes. These lines are extremely fine yet unbroken, achieved by not fully lifting the brush after completing a stroke, but rather carrying it lightly yet steadily across, demanding extremely high manual stability from the writer. In the character '来' (lai) in Figure 18, from the first horizontal stroke, through the dot, the left-falling stroke, and up to the last horizontal stroke, all transitions employ these tangible threads, physically linking them. Similarly, in the character '方' (fang) in the same figure, the connection between the horizontal and the left-falling stroke, though exceedingly fine, constitutes a complete physical link.

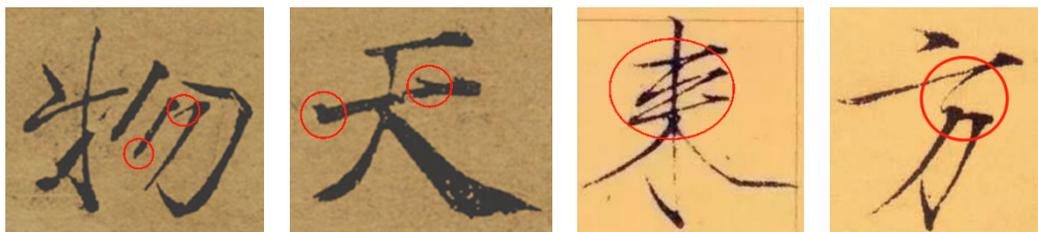


Figure 18: Characters '物', '天' from the *Yin Fu Jing* and '来', '方' from the *Thousand Character Classic*.

### 4.3 Rhythm and Texture

The rhythmic execution of strokes in Chu Suiliang's Large Character Yin Fu Jing and the Slender Gold Style Thousand Character Classic also presents a stark contrast, stemming directly from their fundamental technical differences.

The rhythmic quality of Chu's script is characterized primarily by fluidity and naturalness, with abundant variations in lifting and pressing. This rhythmic character arises firstly from the rich variations in its mid-stroke execution (as discussed in Section 2.1), where, for instance, long horizontal strokes often exhibit wavelike, natural undulations—changes in thickness and angle that are not deliberately designed but result from spontaneous, natural brush movement. Secondly, it stems from his rounded and reserved calligraphic style, where turns do not require deliberate pauses (as discussed in Section 2.2), allowing the brush to maintain a continuous state of motion, making the entire writing process a single, unbroken flow.

In terms of line texture, Chu Suiliang's work generally maintains a relatively moist ink tone, suggesting ample ink loading during writing. This ink usage habit underpins his spontaneous and flexible technique: enabling full pressure on the brush for weighty strokes while allowing swift lifting for slender strokes without producing a scratchy or dry effect.

The rhythmic execution of the Slender Gold Style is deeply influenced by its formulaic construction. Every stroke follows a tripartite rhythm of onset-midstroke-closure. The onset and closure invariably involve pauses and presses, while the mid-stroke phase consistently involves a transition from heavy (after onset) to light (before closure). The manual rhythm of holding the brush is as regular as a mechanical movement. Correspondingly, the ink texture in Emperor Huizong's Slender Gold Style Thousand Character Classic is highly uniform. Because its strokes are generally fine, the writer must frequently replenish ink, ensuring that no stroke suffers from over-inking and bleeding, nor from under-inking and appearing dry or 'thirsty.' The thread-like connections between strokes place even higher demands on the ink's viscosity; it must not be too thick, causing the threads to break, nor too thin, causing them to bleed.

Part 3 Conclusion: Aesthetic Pursuits and Artistic Values Underlying Brushwork Differences

This study has conducted a systematic comparison of the brushwork characteristics in Chu Suiliang's Large Character Yin Fu Jing and Emperor Huizong's Slender Gold Style Thousand Character Classic through formal analysis. The findings reveal that despite a shared visual characteristic of forceful, lean lines, the two styles exhibit sig-

nificant differences in every phase of stroke execution: the onset, mid-stroke movement, and closure. These technical distinctions are rooted in divergent aesthetic pursuits, artistic functions, and the identities of their creators across different eras.

#### 1. The Evolution of Period Aesthetics

Tang Dynasty calligraphy was defined by its 'Emphasis on Rules' (Shangfa), prioritizing technical rigor and transmissibility. Chu Suiliang's Large Character Yin Fu Jing embodies this principle: its brushwork system integrates the archaic flavor of Clerical Script, the discipline of Regular Script, and the dynamism of Running Script. While varied, it strictly adheres to technical conventions, representing a paradigm of expressive achievement within a disciplined framework. Song Dynasty calligraphy shifted towards an 'Emphasis on Personal Expression' (Shangyi), championing individual sensibility and subjective manifestation. The Slender Gold Style represents an extreme development of this trend. It refines and codifies specific brush techniques—such as the slanted-brush entry, deliberate lifting and pressing, and accentuated hooks—into a highly stylized visual language. Its primary aim is to create a powerful sense of visual order and impact, rather than to convey the spontaneity of the writing process itself.

#### 2. Differences in Artistic Function and Creator Identity

As a high-ranking court official, Chu Suiliang's calligraphy combined artistry with public utility; works like the Large Character Yin Fu Jing needed to conform to the standards of Tang official scribal practice. In contrast, as the supreme ruler, Emperor Huizong's calligraphic practice was largely liberated from practical constraints, transforming into a form of pure artistic creation and personal expression. The Slender Gold Style was an experimental product of his artistic vision, its creation motivated more by innovation in visual form than by the demands of utilitarian writing.

#### 3. Value and Position in Calligraphic History

The value of Chu Suiliang's Large Character Yin Fu Jing lies in its summation and sublimation of Tang Dynasty Regular Script orthodoxy. Centered on the principles of 'manifold variation' and 'natural generation,' it masterfully synthesizes the archaic simplicity of Clerical Script, the disciplined structure of Regular Script, and the fluidity of Running Script. His brushwork is eclectic—onsets may be hidden or exposed, mid-strokes exhibit rich modulation, turns are rounded and subtle, and closures adapt to the context. This is not change for its own sake, but rather the liberated expression flowing from his profound mastery of tradition. Its spatial composition also prioritizes natural

balance.

In comparison, Emperor Huizong's Slender Gold Style breakthroughly transformed calligraphy into a purely visual art. Through its highly stylized brushwork and unconventional spatial arrangement, it created an unprecedented visual impact. Although its rigorous codification and consequent lack of variation have often drawn criticism for lacking the 'artistic soul' or 'scribal vitality' traditionally associated with calligraphy, its pioneering significance should not be overlooked.

From the perspective of calligraphic evolution, these two styles represent two crucial dimensions of the art form, each leaving an indelible mark on its history. Chu's style perpetuates the tradition of 'calligraphy as a reflection of the mind' (shu wei xin hua), emphasizing the artistic state of perfect coordination between mind and hand during the act of writing. The Slender Gold Style, however, prefigured the development of calligraphy as a visual art. Its extreme pursuit of formal beauty has profoundly influenced later artistic lettering and modern calligraphic creation. They not only reflect the shift in aesthetic ideals from the Tang to the Song but also illuminate the inherent tension between tradition and innovation within calligraphic art.

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