

## CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

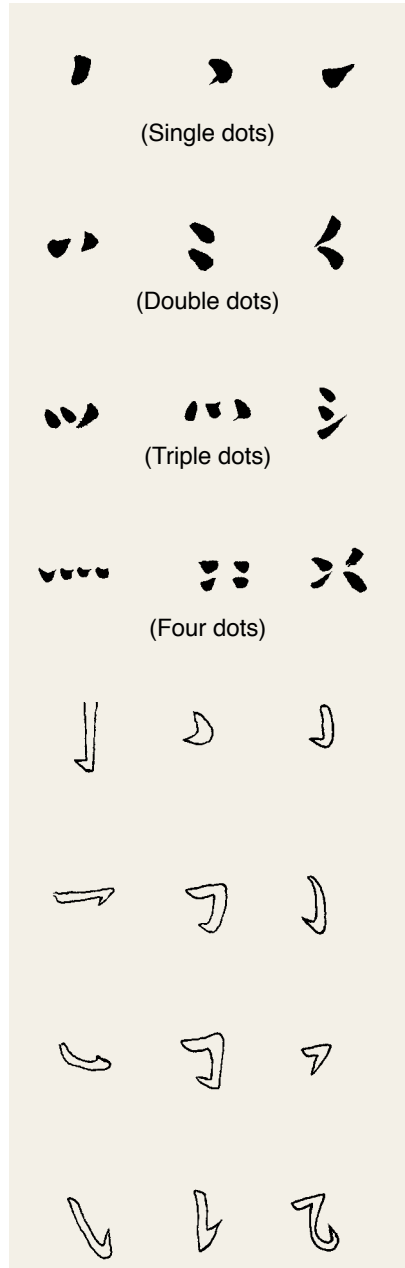
in a dozen different ways. Some are illustrated on the next page.

In a small square space, characters are composed by different strokes linked and arranged in various ways, thus they are easily to read and look neat. These strokes are placed in various positions in the square—upper or lower, left or right, separate or linked, crossed, going through, overlapping, piling up or surrounding.

There are over ten handwriting styles in China, and five scripts are introduced herein. The first three are commonly used, while the other two are archaic and only used in calligraphy nowadays.

### Formal script, or regular style

With a history of more than 1,000 years, formal script is a fundamental writing style and usually appears in printed matter and computer, featuring standard strokes, rigorous rules and a slow speed of writing. The Chinese characters in this style are easy to read. This style is commonly used in shop signs, horizontal or vertical signboards on buildings, Spring Festival couplets, tablets in front of tombs, monuments, nameplates of newspapers and official documents and correspondence.



Dots and hook strokes in different forms.



### Running script

This script has been developed from the quick-writing formal script, and is a style halfway between formal script and cursive script. Such a style is looser than the formal script, and has more links between dots and strokes. Most characters in this style have slanting shapes. All strokes are simple, smooth and light, and are easily recognizable. This writing style appears usually in letters and daily life writing.

### Cursive script

Written at the quickest speed, the characters in this style are further away from the formal script than the running script in form. With irregular forms, some strokes in formal script join together, or parts of strokes or some whole strokes are omitted. So the characters in this style are difficult to write and read.

### Seal script

It is the most ancient calligraphic style. The seal script is not frequently used except for special effects. The ancient stamp-script characters were discovered in inscriptions carved on oracle



Characters are composed of strokes arranged in different ways.



## CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

bones, which were animal bones and tortoise shells used for divination, and on ancient bronze objects as well as in lesser-stamp-style inscriptions. It contains a few strokes without dots, hooks or turning strokes, and seeks a unanimous thickness of lines, symmetry and balanced distribution of strokes. Although people nowadays find them very difficult to read, they are full of mystery and charm. A piece of stamp-script calligraphic work makes the people understand the simple and honest hearts of their earliest artists and inspires high praise for China's ancient culture.

### Official script

This basic form appeared after the seal script, and was mainly used during the Han Dynasty. It changed the rule of unanimous thickness of strokes in the seal script and abolished the pictographic features of the seal script. The characters of this script are flat, contrasted with the long shapes of the other five scripts. The official-script characters are antique but easy to read.





忍若為生他善根若少讀誦已而能為他  
說法義當得不斷辯才佛說此經時文殊  
師利童子及餘菩薩摩訶薩上座舍利弗  
及餘諸比丘并諸天眾提闍婆人阿修羅  
等聞佛所說皆大歡喜  
入法界體性經

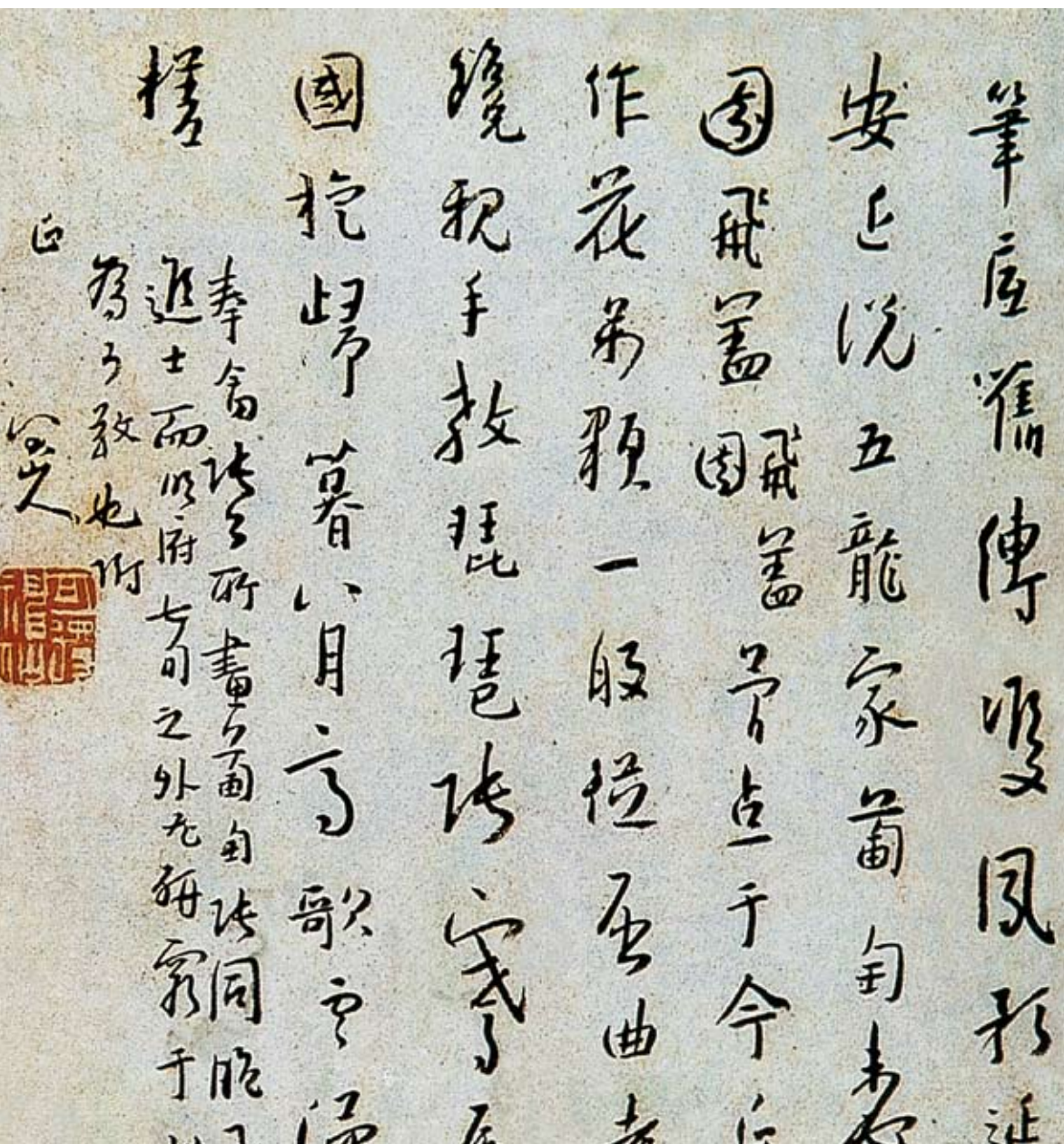
Part of the formal-script *Buddhist Sutra* by Liu Yong of the Qing Dynasty.

Liu Yong (1720–1805) was a grand academican and one of the great four calligraphers of the Qing Dynasty.





CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY



Huge characters in running script by Bada Shanren, or Zhu Da (1626?-1705?), a monk painter of the Qing Dynasty.