

## **An Overview of the Relationship Between the Private Collecting of Calligraphic Model-books and the Development of “Stele Study” During the Late Qianlong Period, Alongside an Examination of the Cultural Implications of the Luoyang Calligraphic Hand**

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### **Abstract**

Similarities between northern and southern calligraphy styles during the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern dynasties period did not come about randomly. Through stylistic analysis, we discover that pronounced elements of the Luoyang hand of regular script (*Luoyangti kaishu*) are in fact stylistically the same as the “new Xizhi hand” (*Xizhi xinti*) found in southern regions. Wang Xizhi’s innovative hand was gradually stripped of its bold and powerful characteristics by “model-book study” (*tiexue*) enthusiasts of the past, yielding the conditions that allowed Qing dynasty “stele study” (*beixue*) adherents to rediscover its presence in the Luoyang hand later on. The revelation of this rediscovery to the world of calligraphic study constituted a major achievement for the “stele study” school. Almost all of the key members of the “stele study” school were closely connected to the families of the prominent art collectors Bi Yuan (1730-1797), Chen Huai (1731-1810), and Mei Liu, a fact which demonstrates the intimate relationship between the emergence of Qing-era “stele study” and its progenitors’ ample exposure to traditional “model-book study.” This paper examines these three families’ collecting activities in order to understand the influence of traditional model-book collecting and connoisseurship upon the rise of the “stele study” school. Simultaneously, this paper reconsiders the historical-cultural implications of the Luoyang hand that the “stele study” school so highly esteemed. The respect traditionally held for the theories of the “two Wangs” (Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi) throughout calligraphic history was in effect excised from “stele study” theory. However, the object of this excision was in actuality the “spurious two Wangs,” whose appearance in reprinted works from the “model-book study” school had

placed both Wangs under the shadow of stigma. Indeed, this act of extirpation allowed the “stele study” school to become closer in essence to the original, untainted “model-book study” of Wang Xizhi’s hand.

**Keywords:** Luoyang hand, Wang Xizhi, new hand, stele study, model-book study, stele rubbing collecting