



Original Research Article

The Research Report on the Rubbings of *Luochi Temple Tablet* Written by Su Shi

Xinde Dou

Chinese Calligraphy Research Institute of School of Chinese Language and Literature of Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China

Abstract: *Luochi Temple Tablet* Written by Su Shi is now kept in Memorial Temple to Liu Zongyuan in Liuzhou City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. To date, there are four editions of rubbings of the tablet. The first and the second are both old rubbings collected by Liu Quanfu and Wang Yirong respectively. The third edition is collected by Qin Qingzeng from Liangxi District of Wuxi City. The fourth edition is an complete rubbing collected by the Institute of Human Sciences of Kyoto University. This article compares the shape and location of the same Chinese characters chosen from the four editions and determines that the edition collected by Liu Quanfu is an earlier one.

Keywords: Su Shi; *Luochi Temple Tablet*; Rubbing

Luochi Temple Tablet was written by Su Shi after around the first year of Shaosheng (1094)^[1]. The tablet is 231 cm in length, 129 cm in width. The inscription was written in standard script and has 10 lines with 16 words per line^[2]. The tablet is now kept in Memorial Temple to Liu Zongyuan in Liuzhou City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The content of the tablet used to be inscribed in *The Copybook from the Walls of Jingsu Garden*. It was re-engraved by Liu Zu, Sansu Temple, and Japan in the Qing Dynasty. This was recorded in many books, including Volume 151 of Wang Chang's *Collection of the writing on Gold and Stones*, Volume 6 of Yang Shouchang's *The Copybook from the Walls of Jingsu Garden* in Qing dynasty.

The four editions of rubbings of *Luochi Temple Tablet* Written by Su Shi can be divided into two types: cut-up and complete rubbings. Of all the rubbings, the optimum editions of *Luochi Temple Tablet* should be as follows: the two old rubbings collected by Liu Quanfu and Wang Yirong respectively, one collected by Qin Qingzeng from Liangxi District of Wuxi City (the collo-type during the Republic of China) and the other one collected by the Institute of Human Sciences of Kyoto University (an complete rubbing). These are authentic origins of the numerous re-engraved edition. The calligraphy on the tablet is so excellent that Wang Shizhen commented on it as “the first place in all the calligraphy,”^[3] When appreciating the calligraphy of the rubbings, we see elegant and heavy Chinese characters, feeling great respect for them. There are four editions of rubbings of the tablet, and I list them as follows:

(1) An old rubbing collected by Wang Yirong at home. Wang Yirong, also Wang Wenmin kept this rubbing from Ming dynasty in his house, which is now kept by the Palace Museum.^[4] The copybook is 26.5 cm in length and 14 cm in width. The cover says “*Luochi Temple Tablet* from Liuzhou City, composed by Han Yu, also Han Changli, written by Su Shi, also Su Changgong. The rubbing from Ming dynasty was kept by Wang Wenmin at home in Fushan.” It has 76 pages and contains two or three characters on a single page.

(2) An old rubbing collected by Liu Quanfu, also Liu Zichong, from Daxing. It has 27 pages, with 6 or 7 characters on a single page, collected by Sansu Temple Museum.

(3) *Luochi Temple Tablet Written by Su Wenzhong in Song Dynasty*^[5], collected by Qin Qingzeng from Liangxi District of Wuxi City (the collo-type during the Republic of China). It has 25 pages, with 6 or 7 characters on a single page.

(4) An complete rubbing collected by the Institute of Human Sciences of Kyoto University. It is 231 cm in length, 129 cm in width. The inscription was written in standard script and has 10 lines with 16 words per line.

The three rubbings mentioned above are all “cut-up editions”, and their broken marks are roughly the same as the original tablet's after restoration. Their sequences are determined through broken marks of the tablet, because “stone grain” is constant, like human fingerprints. If the stone surface is slightly bumpy, the rubbing will immediately show the boundary of the ink color. The shape and location of the boundary will be checked to compare the similarities and differences. And this “stone grain” cannot be forged.^[6] Because the rubbing collected by the Institute of Human Sciences of Kyoto University is an complete rubbing, its “stone grain” is clearer. Now we are going to compare the four editions of rubbings. The old rubbing collected by Wang Yirong will be referred to as “the rubbing from Yirong,” the old rubbing collected by Liu Quanfu will be referred to as “the rubbing from Quanfu,” the rubbing collected by Qin Qingzeng from Liangxi District of Wuxi City will be referred to as “the rubbing from Qingzeng” and the one collected by the Institute of Human Sciences of Kyoto University will be referred to as “the rubbing from Kyoto.” Here comes the result:

The Chinese character “*显*”: In the rubbings from Yirong, Qingzeng and Kyoto, the lower part of the second stroke on the left side of the character is disrupted by the grain, and the last stroke on the upper side of the character is disrupted wholly, while all the strokes

of this character in the rubbing from Quanfu are very clear. The Chinese character “人”: In the rubbings from Yirong, Qingzeng and Kyoto, the lower part of both sides are disrupted by the grain, while the character is relatively clear in the rubbing from Quanfu.



Figure 1 the rubbing from Quanfu

Figure 2 the rubbing from Yirong

Figure 3 the rubbing from Qingzeng

Figure 4 the rubbing from Kyoto

The Chinese character “山”: The lower part of first stroke in the rubbing from Yirong is disrupted by the grain, the middle part of first stroke in the rubbings from Qingzeng and Kyoto is disrupted, while the character in the rubbing from Quanfu are quite clear. The Chinese character “流”: In the rubbings from Quanfu, Qingzeng and Kyoto, the lower part of second stroke is disrupted, while the middle part of all strokes of the character is disrupted in the rubbing from Yirong.



Figure 5 the rubbing from Quanfu

Figure 6 the rubbing from Qingzeng

Figure 7 the rubbing from Yirong

Figure 8 the rubbing from Kyoto

The Chinese character “蛇”: In the rubbings from Yirong and Kyoto, the middle part of the last stroke is disrupted. The character presented in the rubbings from Quanfu and Qingzeng is clear and easy to identify. In the rubbing from Qingzeng, the grain of the last stroke of this character is narrower. The Chinese character “岁”: In the rubbings from Yirong and Kyoto, the lower part of this character is entirely disrupted, the last stroke in the rubbing from Quanfu is disrupted, and the middle part of this character in the rubbings from Qingzeng is disrupted. The Chinese character “侯”: In the rubbings from Quanfu and Kyoto, the grain of the middle part of the last stroke is wider. The latter part of the last stroke is severely out of joint with the rest of this character. And the character is quite clear in the rubbing from Yirong.

By comparing the “grain of the tablet” among the different rubbings of *Luochi Temple Tablet*, it can be roughly considered that the sequences of these rubbings should be as follows: the old rubbing collected by Liu Quanfu, the old rubbing collected by Wang Yirong, the complete rubbing collected by the Institute of Human Sciences of Kyoto University and the one collected by Qin Qingzeng from Liangxi District of Wuxi City (the collo-type during the Republic of China).

Conclusion

Luochi Temple Tablet, as a representative work of Su Shi’s writing on tablets in standard script, has been highly evaluated in the past dynasties. This article compares several rubbings, and we can see that the rubbing from Liu Quanfu kept in Sansu Temple is an earlier rubbing. Surely, there are still many aspects to discuss about the rubbings of *Luochi Temple Tablet*. For example, the commentary on the postscript in the inscription in the private collection, the passing of rubbings, the examination of the seals on the rubbings, etc., are all topics worthy of study.

References:

- [1] Liu Zhengcheng. *Complete Works of Chinese Calligraphy*[M]. Beijing: Rong Bao Zhai Publishing House, 1991: 524.
- [2] Zhang Yansheng. *Records of Rare Rubbings*[M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1984:161.
- [3] Wang Shizhen. *Four Manuscripts of Yanzhou*[M]. Volume 136. Engraved Edition in Wanli of Ming Dynasty.
- [4] Editorial Committee of *Complete Works of Chinese Inscriptions*. *Complete Works of Chinese Inscriptions*[M]. Beijing: People’s Fine Arts Publishing House, 2009: 146.
- [5] Ye Changchi. *Stories of Bibliophiles*[M]. Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Press, 2008: 503.
- [6] Zhong Wei. *Rubbing identification Reference*[M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Calligraphy and Paintings Publishing House, 2015: 240—241.