An Iconological Analysis of Traditional Chinese Calligraphy: Examining Five Styles Through Panofsky's Iconological Theory

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ABSTRACT

This study applies Erwin Panofsky's iconological framework to examine five major Chinese calligraphic styles through a Systematic Literature Review of sources from CNKI and Google Scholar. The analysis shows that existing research predominantly focuses on formal features and symbolic functions, aligning with pre-iconographic and iconographic levels, while deeper iconological interpretations remain limited. By identifying this gap, the study contributes a structured and interdisciplinary approach that expands current analytical models and supports more nuanced interpretations within Chinese calligraphy scholarship.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese calligraphy; Chinese calligraphy style; Panofsky's iconological theory; systematic literature review

INTRODUCTION

Chinese calligraphy has evolved over centuries, embodying profound cultural, historical, and artistic significance. As a unique form of visual art, calligraphy transcends mere writing and serves as a medium for artistic expression and philosophical reflection. However, in the modern era, traditional Chinese calligraphy faces challenges in terms of accessibility and global recognition. While calligraphy remains a revered cultural practice within China, its dissemination and appreciation beyond its native context require a deeper theoretical framework that bridges Eastern and Western aesthetic traditions.

To address this issue, this study employs Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory, a key framework in Western formalist theory, to analyze the characteristics of the five primary styles of Chinese calligraphy: Seal Script, Clerical Script, Regular Script, Running Script, and Cursive Script. By utilizing a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology, this research synthesizes existing studies to outline the defining features of each calligraphic style. Through this approach, the study not only offers a structured understanding of calligraphic styles but also highlights the broader implications of integrating iconological analysis into Chinese art studies.

The application of Panofsky's iconological theory enables a multi-layered analysis of calligraphic forms, examining their pre-iconographic description, cultural context, and symbolic meaning. This theoretical lens provides new insights into how traditional Chinese calligraphy can be interpreted within a global artistic and academic discourse. Furthermore, by employing a systematic and comparative approach, this research contributes to the expanding field of cross-cultural art analysis and facilitates a broader appreciation of Chinese

calligraphy on the international stage.

Through this study, we aim to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western art historical methodologies and foster a renewed appreciation for traditional Chinese calligraphy. By applying Panofsky's iconological framework, this research seeks to advance the scholarly discourse on Chinese calligraphy and contribute to its sustained relevance in contemporary aesthetics and global art studies.

The details will be the following:

In China, calligraphy is a fundamental aspect of traditional arts, embodying profound cultural significance and aesthetic value (Wang, 2010). As multimedia and digital technologies advance, the need to preserve and innovate traditional calligraphy has become increasingly urgent (Zhao, 2018). Scholars in the field of art emphasize the value of tradition, associating it closely with creativity and originality. Within visual arts, German philosopher Walter Benjamin posited that "the uniqueness of an artwork is inherently tied to its integration within tradition" (Greenberg, 1982, p. 10).

In 1938, Chinese scholar Jiang Yi published Chinese Calligraphy, offering Western audiences insights into the aesthetics and techniques of Chinese calligraphy. He likened calligraphy to dance, highlighting the dynamic similarities between the two. According to Liu (2012), the beauty of calligraphy is reflected in its typography, structure, brushstrokes, and composition. Wang Yuzhuo further argues that the intrinsic form and visible lines of Chinese characters directly shape the aesthetic qualities of calligraphic works (Wang, 2023). Consequently, the aesthetics of calligraphy can be understood as closely tied to both the shape of Chinese characters and the broader artistic composition. To further illustrate Jiang Yi's assertion, analyzing calligraphic styles through direct comparison of similar examples enhances the clarity of interpretation. In 1915, Western scholar Heinrich Wolfflin introduced his art theory in Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe, emphasizing that artistic development occurs in recurring cycles. He noted that "art evolves systematically across different periods" (Born, W., 1945, p. 46).

In ancient China, each style of Chinese calligraphy possessed unique features, embodying a synthesis of form, rhythm, and cultural significance. Seal Script is distinguished by its intricate and compact characters, frequently employed in official seals and historical inscriptions (Li, 2015). With its standardized and angular contours, Clerical Script developed as the dominant script for administrative purposes (Chen, 2008). Regular Script, known for its clarity and legibility, remains the standard script for modern Chinese writing (Liu, 2003). In contrast, Running Script and Cursive Script deviate from the rigid structures of earlier scripts, emphasizing fluidity and spontaneity in brushwork (Xu, 2012). These stylistic distinctions reflect the evolution of Chinese calligraphy and its adaptation to various artistic and functional contexts.

Therefore, according to Qian & Fang (2007), he followed the history of Chinese calligraphy, and the 5 styles will be following:

Chuan-shu (wen,篆书) or Chou-wen, Seal Script (Large Seal Script & Small Seal Script)The Chuan-shu script,

also known as a Bronze inscription(金文) or Bell-and-Tripod inscription(钟鼎文), is an important script type in Chinese calligraphy. It can be divided into three main styles: Pictorial Inscription, Great-seal Script/Large seal script, and Small-seal Script. The stamping-seal style, often associated with the Seal-script type, became significant much later, during the Ch'in and Han periods.

Ta-chuan 大篆 (Great-seal Script/Large Seal Script)

The Ta-chuan, or Large Seal Script, was a significant development in the history of Chinese calligraphy. It was primarily used on ritual bronzes and was in use from the eleventh to the seventh century B.C. This script was

derived from both the Pictorial and Oracle Bone Inscriptions and became increasingly narrative and documentary in nature. As the number and length of characters grew, the script became more abstract and regulated in terms of size, columns, and space. This period marked the realization that writing was not only for communication with the divine but could also be used for people's communication purposes.

Hsiao-chuan 小篆 (Small Seal Script)

The Small-seal Script pre-dates the Qin dynasty. It was developed during the Warring States period (475-221 BC) and was widely used in the Qin dynasty as the official script. It was a standardized form of the earlier Seal Script, with more consistent shapes and stroke orders, making it easier to read and write. It is characterized by a more flowing and elegant style, with curved lines and a greater emphasis on balance and harmony. Its name comes from the small seals used to imprint the characters onto documents and objects. The Small-seal Script was later replaced by the Clerical Script as the official script in the Han dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD).

Li-shu, Clerical-script

Li-shu, also known as Clerical Script, is a script that emerged during the Qin and Han periods (221 B.C. to A.D. 221) as state functions became more important and the need for a more efficient and legible writing system arose. This script was simplified from the earlier Chuan-wen script and became the standard for official documents. The Clerical Script is characterized by its angular and straight strokes, with a standardized size and shape for each character. It reached its height of popularity in the Later Han period of the second century A.D. With the improvement of writing tools and the emergence of aesthetic awareness, calligraphers began to develop individual modes of expression, and calligraphy evolved as an art form that emphasized the quality of brushwork produced in ink on rice paper.

K'ai-shu, Regular-script

K'ai-shu, also known as Regular Script, is the most widely used script in modern Chinese and is taught to school children as the standard writing style. It is a simplified and more standardized version of the previous scripts, with fewer strokes and a more consistent form. K'ai-shu emerged in the Han Dynasty and became the official script during the Tang Dynasty, and it has remained the standard writing style in China ever since.

Hsing-shu, Action-script/Running Script

Hsing-shu is a script that combines elements of the Draft and Regular Scripts. It is easier to read than the Draft script, making it popular in administrative circles and among artists. The characters in this script are partially connected, giving it a flowing, cursive appearance. This script is also known as the "running" script, with "hsing" meaning "moving" or "walking" in Chinese. The brush movements in this script are slower than in the Draft script.

Ts'ao-shu, Draft-script/Cursive Script

K'uang-ts'ao, or Wild-cursive Script, is not a form of Ts'ao-shu, but a style that evolved from the Cursive Script. Its rapid and free-flowing strokes characterize it, with characters often connected in a continuous line. It emerged during the Han dynasty and was further developed in the Tang and Song dynasties. Although difficult

to read, it is highly valued as a calligraphic art form.

Figure 1: Chinese characters of styles

Source: Phonetic Changes in the Chinese Language bit.ly/3xHhT08

Therefore, the style of Chinese calligraphy will be following this mind-map:

Figure 1. Chinese calligraphy styles; The example character of calligraphy is "Horse"

Research Objective

To distinguish the different approaches 5 styles of Traditional Chinese calligraphy are based on Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory.

Research Question

What are the different approaches 5 styles of Traditional Chinese calligraphy based on the formalism study.?

REVIEW METHODS

As discussed earlier, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) aims to identify and analyze literature on Chinese calligraphy by developing research questions and selecting relevant studies. Specifically, this review aims to:

  i) Provide a comprehensive summary of existing Chinese calligraphy styles.
  ii) Highlight the limitations of integrating Chinese calligraphy with Panofsky's iconological theory.

iii) Identify new research directions for the study of Chinese calligraphy.

The research follows the strategies proposed by Kitchenham et al.. (2010). In alignment with these strategies, the subsequent sections discuss the review protocol, inclusion and exclusion criteria, search strategy process, selection process, and data extraction and synthesis methods.

Review Protocol

Following the philosophy, principles, and measures outlined by Kitchenham et al. (2010), this systematic study commenced with the development of a comprehensive review protocol. This protocol defines the review background, search strategy, data extraction process, formulation of research questions, and quality assessment criteria for study selection and data analysis. By adhering to this structured approach, the study ensures methodological rigor and reliability in synthesizing findings from the existing body of literature.

Inclusion And Exclusion Criteria

Establishing clear inclusion and exclusion criteria ensures that only relevant articles are considered for this study (Memon et al., 2020). The initial keyword search yielded a total of 1,070 articles in both Chinese and English (for an overview of the selection process, refer to Figure 2). The selection process involved multiple stages of filtering. First, books were excluded to maintain a focus on peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers. Next, articles that appeared in the search results but were unrelated to traditional Chinese calligraphy were removed. Finally, duplicate entries and studies that did not directly address the research questions were excluded to refine the dataset. This systematic approach guarantees that the selected literature aligns with the study's objectives and provides a strong foundation for further analysis.
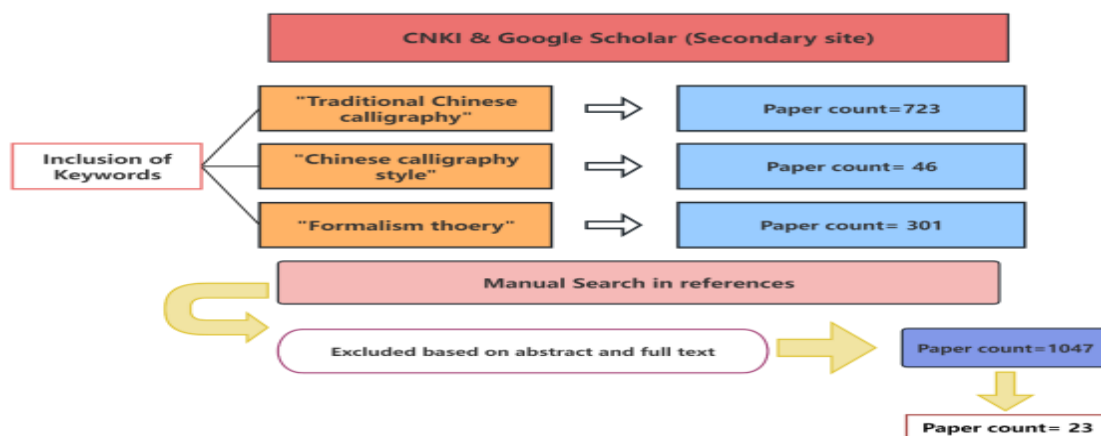

Figure 2. Complete overview of the study selection process

Search Strategy

For automated searches, researchers utilized standard databases that contain the most relevant research articles, including CNKI and Google Scholar. Although books, journals, and blogs provide extensive information, they were not included as primary sources for this review due to the lack of a formal peer-review process, which affects the reliability of their content.

General keywords derived from the researchers' abstracts guided the search for relevant articles. The selected keywords were "Traditional Chinese calligraphy," "Chinese calligraphy style," and "Panofsky's iconological theory." These terms were chosen to align with the study's analytical framework and research objectives.

Once data retrieval was complete, the analysis phase began by assessing the relevance of the collected research articles against the predefined research questions and inclusion/exclusion criteria. A reference management tool, Mendeley, was employed to store and organize all relevant articles. Mendeley also facilitated the identification and removal of duplicate studies, ensuring the accuracy of the dataset.

To further enhance data comprehensiveness, manual searches were conducted to verify that no significant studies had been overlooked. Additionally, all extracted results were systematically imported into a spreadsheet to facilitate data analysis and synthesis.

Study Selection Process

During the search process, researchers conducted independent searches for each of the three keywords. Between 2014 and 2024, 723 documents were identified for "Traditional Chinese calligraphy," 46 for "Chinese calligraphy style," and 301 for "Panofsky's iconological theory." The inclusion and exclusion criteria were then applied based on the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the retrieved literature. After eliminating duplicate records and studies unrelated to the research focus, 23 relevant articles were selected for final analysis.

Data Extraction And Synthesis

As previously mentioned, the researcher utilized Mendeley and Excel to manage research data, including study topics, titles, abstracts, authors, publication years, and methodologies. These data were extracted following a thorough analysis of each study, forming the basis for this research's results.

A comprehensive review of all 23 selected articles was conducted, primarily focusing on the characteristics of calligraphy styles. After meticulous examination, only 12 articles were considered highly relevant due to their in-depth discussions on calligraphy style features. The selection process aimed to distill insights specifically related to the diverse styles of calligraphy, ensuring that the most informative and contextually significant studies were retained.

This careful curation ensured that the selected articles provided substantial insights into the nuances of calligraphy styles, contributing valuable knowledge to the understanding of this intricate art form. By narrowing the selection to 12 articles, the researcher sought to consolidate and highlight key findings relevant to Panofsky's iconological analysis of traditional Chinese calligraphy. The details of these 12 papers are presented in Table 1.

Table I Summary of Characteristics of Chinese Calligraphy Style

Calligraphy Style	Author & Year	Characteristics
Cursive script	Xiaoqing Yuan, 2023	Cursive script: relaxed and natural.
		Brushstrokes: Rounded lines with breaks.
		Typography: Independent distribution of characters, variations in spatial and ink density, and a strong sense of movement.
		Composition: Independent relationship between characters, varied ink shades with a pattern of ink from heavy to light,
		Spaciousness between the lines.
Regular script	Yuan He,2023	Chinese calligraphy style: Freedom and agility.

Running script		Running script: Smooth. Regular script: Neat.
Running script	Kaisheng Liu, 2016	Running script: Neutrality aesthetic
Seal script Clerical script Regular script Running script Cursive script	Wenyan Cheng et al., 2023	Seal script: difficult to discern, rounded strokes, slender, few variations in stroke thickness, characters are elongated with symmetrical structure. Clerical script: Flat characters. Regular script: Standardized and balanced. Running script: Dynamic and lively with some connected strokes. Cursive script: Continuous dots and strokes, free and authentic, difficult to identify.
Seal script	Zihao Wang, 2017	Seal script: Unique form in bronze inscriptions. Small Seal Script: Grand overall appearance, vertically elongated characters, beautiful lines.
Chinese calligraphy style	Yunfei Meng, 2018	Combination of strength and softness, elegance and simplicity, correctness and oddity, and skill and clumsiness.
Seal script Regular script Running script Cursive script	Yi Xu & Ruoci Shen, 2023	Small Seal Script: Fills an imaginary square, balanced and well-spaced. Regular script: Each character is balanced and well-angled. Running script: Relaxes the tension of stroke arrangement; strokes are often connected. Cursive Script: Simplifies characters and abstract art.
Regular script Running script	Xin Fu, Manoon Tho-ard, 2023	Regular script: Symmetrical layout, concise and grand, conveys a unified, harmonious, balanced aesthetic. Running script: Strong rhythmic quality, seemingly free yet inherently governed form.
Seal script Regular script Cursive script	Nora Halimi, 2021	Seal script: The oldest style. Regular script: The standard form of Chinese writing. Cursive script: Abstract style.
Seal script Regular script Running script Cursive script	Zicheng Wang, 2015	Seal script: Standardized and robust, used for official documents. Regular script: Foundation of modern calligraphy. Running script: Free-flowing and smooth, characterized by rapid strokes and continuous lines. Cursive script: Unique and personalized, characterized by boldness and passion.
Seal script Regular script	Jiahui Guo & Xianshuang Su, 2023	Seal script: Primitive character structures. Small Seal Script: Standardized and concise, smooth strokes.

		Regular script: Symmetrical and concise, faster writing speed than Large Seal Script, suitable for large-scale writing and dissemination, consistent rhythm and structure.
Seal script Clerical script Regular script Running script Cursive script	Xiongbo Shi, 2017	Seal script: Abstract with highly standardized characters and balanced structure. Clerical script: Elongated strokes emphasizing compositional balance. Regular script: Most legible among the five scripts, with squared and clear strokes, traditionally used for practicing calligraphy and as the standard book script. Running script: Appreciated as a medium between cursive and regular script, less normalized than regular script but more discernable than cursive script. Cursive script: Expresses calligraphers' emotions through stroke omission or merging.

Therefore, by combining Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory, the characteristics of Chinese calligraphy with the paper of the table will be the following:

Table IITable I₁-V₁. Characteristics Of Chinese Calligraphy With Erwin Panofsky's Iconological Theory Of Small Seal Script

Author & Year	Characteristics	Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory
Zihao Wang, 2017	Grand overall appearance	Pre-iconographic Analysis
	Vertically elongated characters, beautiful lines	Pre-iconographic Analysis
Yixu & Ruoci Shen, 2023	Square, balanced, and well-spaced	Pre-iconographic Analysis
Nora Halimi, 2021	The oldest style	Iconological interpretation
Zicheng Wang, 2015	Standardized and robust	Iconographic analysis
	Used for official documents	Iconographic analysis
Jiahui Guo & Xiashuang Su, 2023	Standardized and concise	Iconographic analysis
	Smooth strokes	Pre-iconographic Analysis
Xiongbo Shi, 2017	Standardized characters	Iconographic analysis
	Balanced structure	Pre-iconographic Analysis

Table III Clerical Script

Author & Year	Characteristics	Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory
Wenyan Cheng ect., 2023	Flat characters	Pre-iconographic Analysis
Xiongbo Shi, 2017	Elongated strokes emphasizing compositional balance	Pre-iconographic Analysis

Table IV Regular Script

Author & Year	Characteristics	Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory
Yuan He, 2023	Neat	Pre-iconographic Analysis
Wenyan Cheng ect., 2023	Standardized and balanced	Pre-iconographic Analysis
Yixu & Ruoci Shen, 2023	Each character is balanced and well-angled	Pre-iconographic Analysis
Xinfu, Manoon Tho-ard, 2023	Symmetrical layout, concise and grand	Pre-iconographic Analysis
	Conveys and unified, harmonious	Iconographic analysis
Jiahui Guo and Xianshuang Su, 2023	Symmetrical and concise	Pre-iconographic Analysis
	Consistent rhythm and structure	Pre-iconographic Analysis
Xiongbo Shi, 2017	Square and clear strokes	Pre-iconographic Analysis

Table V Running Scrıp

Author & Year	Characteristics	Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory
Yuan He, 2023	Smooth	Pre-iconographic analysis
Kaisheng Liu, 2016	Neutrality aesthetic	Iconographic analysis
Wenyan Cheng ect., 2023	Dynamic and lively	Pre-iconographic analysis
Yixu & Ruoci Shen, 2023	Relaxes the tension of stroke arrangement	Pre-iconographic analysis
	Strokes are often connected	Pre-iconographic analysis
Xinfu, Manoon Tho-ard, 2023	Strong rhythm quality	Pre-iconographic analysis
	Inherently governed form	Pre-iconographic analysis
Zicheng Wang, 2015	Free-following and continuous lines	Pre-iconographic analysis
	Free-following and smooth lines	Pre-iconographic analysis
Xiongbo Shi, 2017	More discernible than Cursive script	Iconographic analysis

Table VI Cursıve Scrıpt

Author & Year	Characteristics	Erwin Panofsky's iconological theory
Xiaoqing Yuan, 2023	Relaxed and natural	Pre-iconographic analysis
	Rounded lines with breaks	Pre-iconographic analysis
	Strong sense of movement	Pre-iconographic analysis
	Independent distribution of characters	Pre-iconographic analysis
	Variations in spatial and ink density	Pre-iconographic analysis
Yixu & Ruoci Shen, 2023	Simplifies characters and abstract art	Pre-iconographic analysis
Nora Halimi, 2021	Abstract style	Iconographic analysis
Zicheng Wang, 2015	Personalized and unique	Pre-iconographic analysis
	Boldness and passion	Pre-iconographic analysis

| Xiongbo Shi, 2017 | Express calligraphers' emotions | Iconological interpretation |
| | Stroke omission or merging | Pre-iconographic analysis |

DISCUSSION & CONLUSION

Discussion

According to table 2 above, it can be observed that in the context of Erwin Panofsky's theory, most of the characteristics associated with Small Seal Script correspond to the pre-iconographic analysis. The calligraphic features linked to pre-iconographic analysis include grand overall appearance, vertically elongated characters, beautiful lines, square structure, balanced and well-spaced arrangement, smooth strokes, and a well-balanced structure. The features associated with iconographic analysis include standardized characters, standardized and concise form, usage in official documents, and a standardized and robust structure. Finally, the iconological interpretation stage corresponds to the Small Seal Script being the oldest style.

Based on this correspondence, it becomes evident that applying Erwin Panofsky's theory to analyse and categorize the stylistic features of the Small Seal Script is highly appropriate. This theory encompasses three analytical dimensions: the pre-iconographic analysis, the iconographic analysis, and the iconological interpretation. These three dimensions follow a progressive structure: the first stage focuses on analysing the formal characteristics of an artwork, the second examines its symbolic meanings, and the third explores its deeper significance and historical influence. This analytical framework aligns closely with the methodology for studying Chinese calligraphic styles, which also follows a hierarchical approach, starting with formalism observation.

In Chinese calligraphy, the formalism analysis of an artwork and its artistic style primarily involves examining calligraphic lines, structure, character forms, size, spacing between characters, brush techniques, and overall composition. This corresponds directly with the pre-iconographic analysis stage in Panofsky's framework.

Based on the information above, the stylistic features of the second calligraphic style-Clerical Script (Table II), are characterized by flat characters and elongated strokes emphasizing compositional balance. Since both features primarily reflect the formalistic aspects of calligraphy artworks, they correspond to the first dimension of Erwin Panofsky's theory-pre-iconographic analysis.

The extracted features for the third calligraphic style (Regular Script) correspond to Erwin Panofsky's theory's first and second dimensions.

In the first dimension (pre-iconographic analysis), which focuses on the formalism of calligraphy style, the corresponding calligraphic features are:

symmetrical layout, concise and grand, symmetrical and concise, consistent rhythm and structure, square and clear strokes, neat, standardized and balanced, each character is balanced and well-grand.

In the second dimension (iconographic analysis), which emphasizes symbolic meaning and internal coherence, the corresponding calligraphic features are: convey a unified and harmonious expression.

For the extracted characteristics of Running Script, it is evident that most features correspond to Erwin Panofsky's pre-iconographic analysis. These features include smooth execution, relaxed tension in stroke arrangement, strokes often connected, inherently governed form, free-flowing and continuous lines, free-flowing and smooth lines, dynamic and lively expression, and strong rhythmic quality.

Additionally, certain features correspond to iconographic analysis, which emphasizes symbolic meaning and functional expression. These features include neutrality and aesthetic quality, as well as being more discernible than Cursive Script.

For the extracted characteristics of Cursive Script, most features correspond to Erwin Panofsky's pre-iconographic analysis, while only two features are associated with iconographic analysis, and no characteristics explicitly align with iconological interpretation.

The features corresponding to pre-iconographic analysis include relaxed and natural execution, rounded lines with breaks, strong sense of movement, independent distribution of characters, variations in spatial and ink density, simplification of characters as abstract art, personalization and uniqueness, boldness and passion, as well as stroke omission or merging.

Conclusion

The analysis of Chinese calligraphic styles through Erwin Panofsky's theoretical framework reveals that most of the extracted characteristics align with the first dimension (pre-iconographic analysis) and the second dimension (iconographic analysis), while the third dimension (iconological interpretation) is addressed less. The findings suggest that formalistic elements- including character structure, stroke execution, spatial arrangement, brushwork techniques, and compositional balance—are the primary focus in categorizing different calligraphic styles, closely aligning with the pre-iconographic analysis stage. This stage primarily concerns the visual and structural properties of calligraphy, emphasizing how strokes, spacing, and the overall composition define a given style.

In addition to these formal aspects, the symbolic meaning and functional significance of calligraphy, as expressed through standardized forms, script legibility, and practical usage in historical contexts, correspond to iconographic analysis. This dimension highlights how specific stylistic choices and character formations reflect historical functions, cultural conventions, and administrative purposes, reinforcing the structured evolution of calligraphic styles over time.

However, fewer extracted characteristics explicitly relate to the iconological interpretation dimension, which is concerned with the deeper cultural, philosophical, and historical implications of calligraphic styles. This suggests that existing literature and the extracted data primarily emphasize the visual and functional aspects of calligraphy, rather than examining how each style embodies intellectual thought, philosophical traditions, or sociopolitical influences across different historical periods. The relative absence of iconological interpretation indicates a potential gap in research, where further exploration is needed to uncover how Chinese calligraphy reflects broader historical narratives, ideological developments, and artistic transformations within different dynastic and cultural contexts.

By leveraging scholarly databases such as CNKI & Google Scholar, this study demonstrates the applicability of Panofsky's methodology in systematically analysing the stylistic evolution of Chinese calligraphy. Additionally, the study identifies research gaps related to the third interpretative dimension, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that integrates historical, philosophical, and cultural perspectives alongside stylistic and functional analyses. This further suggests that future research should explore the intellectual and cultural underpinnings of calligraphic styles, fostering a deeper understanding of Chinese calligraphy's role in shaping and reflecting broader artistic and historical discourses.

This study makes several key contributions to the scholarly discourse on Chinese calligraphy analysis by applying Erwin Panofsky's iconological framework to systematically examine the five major calligraphic styles. By analysis from CNKI & Google Scholar, this research provides a structured methodology for

categorizing calligraphic features through pre-iconographic analysis (formalistic elements), iconographic analysis (symbolic meaning and function), and iconological interpretation (deep cultural and historical significance).

One of the primary contributions of this study is its integration of a cross-disciplinary theoretical approach in the analysis of Chinese calligraphy, offering a systematic framework that bridges art history, calligraphy studies, and digital humanities methodologies. By demonstrating that most extracted characteristics align with the first and second dimensions, while the third dimension is less frequently addressed, this research highlights existing analytical tendencies in calligraphy scholarship, which predominantly focus on visual and functional aspects rather than deeper intellectual and cultural implications.

Furthermore, this study identifies a critical research gap in the iconological interpretation of Chinese calligraphy, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive exploration of how calligraphic styles embody historical narratives, ideological developments, and artistic transformations. By systematically analyzing calligraphy through a Panofsky perspective, this research underscores the importance of moving beyond purely formalistic and functional analyses to include broader cultural, philosophical, and historical contexts.

Ultimately, this research not only enhances the theoretical understanding of Chinese calligraphy within the global art historical framework but also provides a structured methodology that can support its international recognition and integration into broader aesthetic and scholarly discussions.

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