

The Formative Context of Qian Chenqun's "Aged and Vigorous" Calligraphic Style and Emperor–Minister Interaction

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Abstract: *Qian Chenqun (1686–1774), courtesy name Zhuqing and art name Xiangshu, was a native of Jiaxing, Zhejiang, in the Qing dynasty. His calligraphic style can be understood not only from the perspective of technical transmission but also within the context of poetic exchanges between court literary officials and the emperor during the Qing period. Through his commendation of the Qian family tradition, the Qianlong Emperor conferred an orthodox status upon Qian Chenqun's calligraphy, providing the essential precondition for his distinction among the numerous court literary officials. Qian Chenqun's adoption of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic style was shaped by the artistic trends of his time and also benefited from the fortuitous opportunity to become acquainted with the Qing collector An Qi. In his later years, his "aged and vigorous" calligraphic style developed into a form of running-cursive script characterized by seasoned mastery, naturalness, and spontaneity under the combined influence of physiological decline and imperial expectations.*

Keywords: *Qian Chenqun; calligraphic style; aged and vigorous; Qianlong Emperor; emperor–minister interaction*

1. The Qian Family Tradition and the Qianlong Emperor's Recognition of Qian Chenqun's Calligraphy

Qian Chenqun served under the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong reigns and enjoyed exceptional imperial favor throughout his official career. Although the Qing court literary establishment included many accomplished calligraphers, few received such sustained praise from the Qianlong Emperor as Qian Chenqun. This enduring imperial favor cannot be explained solely by his artistic accomplishment in calligraphy; rather, it should also be understood in terms of a deeper level of political and cultural identity.

In the eyes of the Qianlong Emperor, Qian Chenqun was first a mature, upright, and circumspect Confucian official, and only then a court literary official distinguished for his calligraphy. According to the Chronological Biography of Grand Secretary Wenduan compiled by his great-grandson Qian Yiji, the Yongzheng Emperor remarked in the eleventh year of the Yongzheng reign (1733): "Qian Chenqun is distinguished not only by the excellence of his writing but also by the integrity of his character." [1] The Qianlong Emperor likewise held him in exceptionally high regard. In the preface to Five Poems on Five Court Literary Officials, he observed: "Among the retired civil officials, only Qian Chenqun and Shen Deqian possess the age, official standing, and learning to serve as exemplars for the scholar-official class." [2] Even after Qian Chenqun's death, the commemorative inscription bestowed by the Qianlong Emperor stated: Among the elderly ministers renowned for their virtue and distinction, Qian Chenqun enjoyed the highest reputation. He was held in universal esteem at court as a venerable statesman of exemplary moral character. The Emperor generously bestowed his favor upon his trusted ministers, while Qian Chenqun's achievements in the literary world had long been celebrated. Through his upright bearing he embodied the qualities of maturity and composure, and in his later years the Emperor's care and favor toward him became ever more profound. [1] These records demonstrate that both the Yongzheng and Qianlong Emperors held Qian Chenqun's moral character and scholarship in the highest esteem. The Qianlong Emperor ultimately characterized his life as one distinguished by seasoned composure, uprightness and prudence, and profound, orthodox learning.

Qian Chenqun's ability to gain the appreciation of the Qianlong Emperor and the latter's subsequent admiration for his calligraphy was rooted in the emperor's recognition of the Qian family tradition. Qian Chenqun once stated to the Qianlong Emperor: "From childhood, I was instructed by my mother.

Since entering official service, I have remained unwaveringly loyal and conscientious in the discharge of my duties, exercising leniency where appropriate and severity where necessary, never daring to show the slightest negligence or impropriety." [3] This indicates that Qian Chenqun's moral character throughout his life was profoundly shaped by his mother, Chen Shu, and that the integrity of his family tradition constituted the foundation upon which the Qianlong Emperor came to value his calligraphy and repeatedly composed poems in response to his works. Volume 26 of *Collected Works of Xiangshu Studio* records that Qian Chenqun repeatedly failed the civil service examinations, yet his mother encouraged him, saying, "My son possesses the ability to succeed in scholarship; if his opportunity comes somewhat later, what cause is there for concern?" [3] Qian Chenqun subsequently passed the provincial examination in Shuntian and obtained the juren degree. Upon hearing the news, his mother sent him a letter in which she earnestly admonished him, urging him to "temper his moral character and exercise prudence in choosing friends." [3] These accounts demonstrate that the formation of Qian Chenqun's resilient character was inseparable from his mother's instruction.

The scene depicting the maternal instruction received by the Qian family was painted by a contemporary artist as *Illustration of Spinning at Night and Teaching the Classics*, which Qian Chenqun presented to the emperor for inspection. In the seventeenth year of the Qianlong reign (1752), after viewing the painting, the Qianlong Emperor commented: It conveys sincere and deeply moving sentiments of maternal affection and filial devotion, while clearly revealing that Qian Chenqun's scholarly foundation originated in his mother's instruction. Having attained high official rank, he was indeed able to console his mother for the hardships she had once endured, a thought that moves me profoundly. Jiaying in Zhejiang should continue its tradition of commemorating exemplary mothers, and Chen Shu deserves to be counted among those virtuous mothers who, like the mother of Ouyang Xiu, successfully educated her son through her own example. [4] The Qianlong Emperor held the Qian family's tradition of maternal instruction and filial devotion in exceptionally high esteem. Thereafter, *Illustration of Spinning at Night and Teaching the Classics* became a symbolic representation of the Qian family tradition.



Figure 1. Chen Shu, *Album of Miscellaneous Paintings* (paper album, Collection of Taipei Palace Museum).

The Qianlong Emperor's commendation of the Qian family did not cease with Qian Chenqun's lifetime. Eight years after Qian Chenqun's death, the Qianlong Emperor inscribed the phrase "Eternal Preservation of Pure Fragrance" at the beginning of Chen Shu's album of paintings and ordered Qian's descendants to preserve Chen Shu's artworks from generation to generation. He also bestowed a poem, stating: "Chen Shu's artistic skill in painting was unparalleled; her descendants were nourished by her influence, continuing to respond with poetic inscriptions and ensuring the unbroken transmission of brush and ink." [2] This reflected the Qian family's emphasis on the inheritance of painting and calligraphy traditions. In the following years, the Qianlong Emperor continued to inscribe poetic praises on Chen Shu's paintings. In the forty-ninth year of the Qianlong reign (1784), his imperial inscription on Chen Shu's *Album of Miscellaneous Paintings* (Figure 1) recorded: "The fruits and vegetables depicted in the painting embody auspicious meanings of prosperity and abundance. Within Qian Chenqun's household, an atmosphere of familial celebration and harmony prevailed; this painting presents the beauty of spring and the passage of peaceful years." In the following year, the Qianlong

Emperor again composed a poem on Chen Shu's Painting of Mountains in Tranquility and Days of Leisure, writing: "One may imagine that Chen Shu devoted herself diligently to educating her son in those years, and now she has finally witnessed the fulfillment of her efforts. Moreover, Qian Chenqun's compilation of Collected Works of Xiangshu Studio indeed displays a fresh literary style and remarkable achievements." These inscriptions reveal the depiction of family tradition and the remembrance of deceased figures in the emperor's poetic responses to paintings. Taking Qian Chenqun as the central reference point, the Qianlong Emperor integrated the appreciation of paintings, the commemoration of individuals, and reflections on family tradition into a unified framework. Qian Chenqun's reputation in calligraphy was thus manifested within the broader context of the Qianlong Emperor's recognition of the Qian family tradition.

Compared with the aforementioned inscriptions and poetic responses on various paintings, the Qianlong Emperor's repeated inscriptions on Chen Shu's Imitation of Wang Meng's Dwelling in the Mountains in Summer were more distinctive. From 1782 to 1793, over a period of more than ten years, the Qianlong Emperor composed five poems on this painting. Three of these inscriptions stated:

The album of poetry and the painting are viewed together. Chen Shu's techniques for depicting mountains and rocks are identical to Wang Meng's methods of painting lotus leaves. This painting has found a fitting place on my desk, yet it unexpectedly brings to mind an old friend.

Viewing this ancient painting once again in the mountain studio, the layered clouds and overlapping peaks are filled with lotus leaves. In those years, Qian Chenqun accompanied his presentation of poetry with paintings; today, as I hold this painting and reflect upon the past, those who can discuss poetry have become fewer.

In recent years, I have viewed this painting again at the Mountain Resort for Escaping the Summer Heat. The long scroll remains filled with a sense of coolness and serenity. Qian Chenqun once presented both poetry and painting; now, recalling those past occasions of discussing scholarship and art in Zhejiang, they have already faded away like drifting clouds and mist.

The Qianlong Emperor's inscriptions on paintings reveal that, throughout his career as a court literary official, Qian Chenqun repeatedly presented poetry and paintings to the emperor, and that the Qianlong Emperor held these works in exceptionally high regard. The entire poem moves from concrete objects toward an abstract emotional realm, reflecting the Qianlong Emperor's remembrance of the deceased Qian Chenqun and his esteem for the Qian family tradition. This sentiment extended to his appreciation of Qian Chenqun's calligraphy, and his late "aged and vigorous" calligraphic style was formed within this particular context. It can therefore be seen that, in the eyes of the Qianlong Emperor, a court literary official's calligraphy was not merely an artistic expression, but rather a natural manifestation of personal character and family tradition.

2. Qian Chenqun's Process of Adopting Zhao Mengfu's Calligraphic Style

The formation of Qian Chenqun's calligraphic style was not achieved overnight; rather, it underwent multiple stages, including diligent study amid hardship in his early years, extensive exposure to renowned calligraphic works in middle age, and access to imperial collections during his official career. Ultimately, under the combined influence of contemporary artistic trends and his personal aesthetic preferences, his calligraphic style gradually converged with the tradition of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy. In his youth, Qian Chenqun studied diligently. Volume 18 of Supplement to the Poetry Collection of Xiangshu Studio records his own recollection: "From the age of eighteen, I was forced by financial circumstances to leave home and seek a livelihood. I went to live with my father-in-law in the capital, where he asked me to assist with editorial and proofreading work. In winter, I had no fur garments. When I rose in the morning to practice regular script, my hands became cracked from the cold. I quietly avoided others and went to a remote small marketplace, where I spent three hundred copper coins and could only purchase a pair of leather sleeves. I personally sewed them onto my cotton robe, and only then did I feel slightly warmer. The next day, I continued copying texts as usual." [5] Even under such difficult conditions, he never neglected his studies or calligraphic practice, demonstrating that the foundation of his calligraphic training was exceptionally solid.

In his early years, Qian Chenqun studied the calligraphic styles of Yan Zhenqing and Liu Gongquan. The turning point that transformed his calligraphic style came from his experience in Tianjin in the fifty-ninth year of the Kangxi reign (1720). When Qian Chenqun, at the age of thirty-five, was residing in Tianjin, he met the collector An Qi. Qian Yiji's Chronological Biography of Grand Secretary

Wenduan Qian Chenqun records: "An Qi excelled in connoisseurship. Whenever he encountered rare ancient paintings and calligraphic works that had once been collected by major collectors such as the Bian family of Henan and the Liang family of Zhen Ding, he would spend his entire fortune acquiring them. The famous paintings and exemplary calligraphic works in his collection were unrivaled in the Beijing region. Upon hearing that Qian Chenqun had arrived in Tianjin, he brought out all of his treasured paintings and calligraphic works and invited Qian Chenqun to evaluate and distinguish their qualities. At the same time, he studied poetry with Qian Chenqun and sought his guidance in calligraphy. Qian Chenqun was therefore able to examine An Qi's collection extensively. Whenever he encountered authentic works by renowned masters of previous dynasties, he carefully studied them and repeatedly practiced copying them, and the works he produced became remarkably similar to those of the ancients." [1] After viewing Qian Chenqun's calligraphy, An Qi praised it, saying: "Judging from the spirit and resonance of his calligraphy, it is almost identical to the ancient model calligraphies preserved in Guxiang Studio." [1] This remark effectively placed Qian Chenqun's calligraphy on the same level of comparison as the renowned ancient works in An Qi's collection. At the same time, through this experience, Qian Chenqun greatly broadened his artistic vision and absorbed the essence of traditional brush techniques, an extraordinary opportunity rarely encountered by ordinary practitioners.

As Qian Chenqun entered official service, he also gained opportunities to participate in the Qianlong Emperor's activities of appreciating paintings and calligraphy. In his Memorial of Thanks for the Bestowal of the Model Calligraphies from the Three Rarities Hall, Qian Chenqun stated: "While serving at court, I was fortunate enough to view the imperial collections preserved within the palace. After retiring from office and returning to my hometown in Jiangnan, I was still able to personally handle those precious model calligraphies with exquisite mounting." [3] Later, in his Memorial of Thanks for the Bestowal of the Calligraphic Works from Moyao Studio, he wrote: "Not long after I had returned to my humble dwelling, I received the gift of newly engraved model calligraphies from the court. Afterwards, while sitting peacefully in my quiet study, I was repeatedly granted imperial calligraphic treasures personally written by the Emperor." [3] Whether serving at court or living in his hometown after retirement, Qian Chenqun was able to appreciate the model calligraphies of renowned masters from previous dynasties preserved in the Qianlong Emperor's collection. His calligraphy continued to advance as his artistic vision expanded. The transformation of Qian Chenqun's calligraphic style was closely related to the personal aesthetic preferences of the Qianlong Emperor. In the preface to Five Poems on Five Court Literary Officials, the Qianlong Emperor wrote: "Qian Chenqun possessed profound achievements in poetic learning, and his calligraphy was also vigorous and seasoned. After his retirement and return home, I sent him more than one hundred imperial poems each year for him to compose responses. After completing the poems in the same rhyming pattern, Qian Chenqun compiled them into album leaves and presented them to me. Each album contained inscriptions and postscripts, and the characters combined running script and cursive script. I greatly cherished these works." [2] The Qing scholar Zhen Jun also recorded in A Brief Compilation of Calligraphers of the Present Dynasty: "Even when he was over eighty years old, the poetry albums he presented to the Emperor were all personally transcribed by him in running script, and they possessed remarkable elegance and charm." [6] Under the influence of the Emperor's preference for Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic style, combined with Qian Chenqun's extensive calligraphic practice after entering official service, his calligraphic style gradually moved toward the tradition of Zhao Mengfu.

Qian Chenqun possessed a clear understanding of the lineage of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic style. In the colophon of his transcription of Diamond Sutra (Figure 2), completed in the twenty-fifth year of the Qianlong reign (1760), he wrote: "The Diamond Sūtra written by Zhao Mengfu, a minister of the Yuan dynasty, was mostly executed in a style combining running and regular script, and even today many temples still preserve copies of it. Wen Zhengming, Wang Guxiang, and others also imitated his manner of writing." In his Postscript to the Stone Inscription of Zhao Wenmin's Calligraphy of the Diamond Sūtra, he further stated explicitly: "I admire Zhao Mengfu's brushwork for its strength and elegance." [7] This evaluation represented not only his personal aesthetic preference but also reflected the prevailing artistic climate of the Qianlong period, when Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic style enjoyed great popularity. Qian Chenqun not only studied Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy himself but also encouraged his son to draw nourishment from it. In Supplement to the Poetry Collection of Xiangshu Studio, Qian Chenqun wrote: "The regular script model I passed on to my son was Zhao Mengfu's Jian'an Letter. Among his scattered works in running script, there was also the Song of Health Preservation. In addition, there was the newly engraved Handscroll of Mientan Shangguan, all of which I instructed him to carefully study and practice." [5] Among the two handwritten works by Zhao Mengfu collected by Qian Chenqun, one was the Jian'an Letter, which provided a model for the

principles of regular script, and the other was the Song of Health Preservation, which offered guidance for the brushwork and spirit of running script. Qian Chenqun asked his son Qian Rucheng to diligently copy and carefully study these two works representing different approaches to brush techniques, demonstrating his admiration for Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic style.

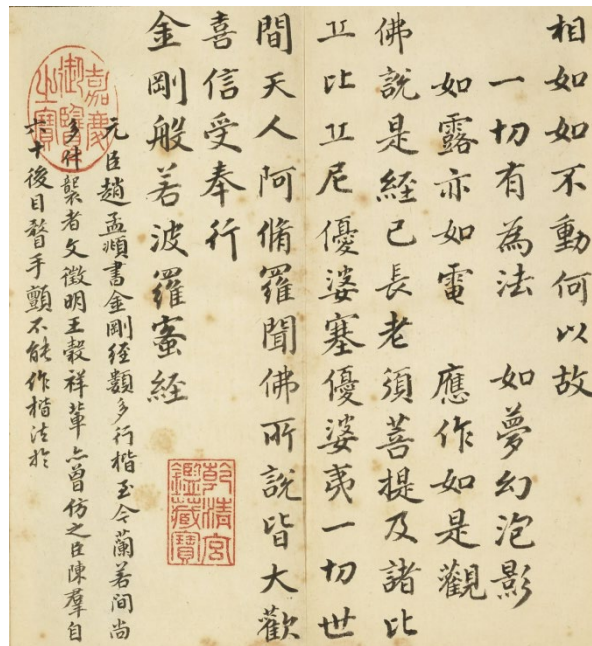


Figure 2. Qian Chenqun, *Diamond Sutra* (paper album, Collection of Taipei Palace Museum).

Qian Chenqun's study of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy was not a process of complete imitation. For example, in the colophon of his transcription of the Diamond Sutra, he wrote: "In the eighth month of the twenty-fifth year of the Qianlong reign, as the Emperor's fiftieth birthday approached, I respectfully offered birthday congratulations from my hometown while facing the direction of the imperial palace. From the tenth to the seventeenth day of the eighth month, I established an incense altar at home, sat in quiet devotion, and respectfully transcribed the Diamond Sūtra, with the calligraphic style slightly modeled after that of Zhao Mengfu." The use of the term "slightly" here indicates that Qian Chenqun did not presume to claim that his calligraphy had already achieved a resemblance to Zhao Mengfu's style, while also honestly acknowledging the distance that remained between his own work and Zhao's model. This demonstrates that his adoption of Zhao Mengfu's style involved selection and adaptation rather than mere replication. Such an approach was particularly crucial to the formation of his later running-cursive calligraphic style.

3. Qian Chenqun's Practice of Running-Cursive Script in the Context of Emperor–Minister Poetic Exchanges

The formation of Qian Chenqun's late calligraphic style developed in parallel with the gradual decline of his physical condition. Qian Yiji's Chronological Biography of Grand Secretary Wenduan Qian Chenqun records, "After Qian Chenqun retired and lived in leisure, whenever major ceremonies were held at court, he would personally compose eulogistic poetry and prose, then have others respectfully transcribe them and present them to the Emperor. The Emperor issued an edict asking: 'Why do you not write them yourself?' Qian Chenqun replied that he was advanced in age and could no longer write regular script. The Emperor then instructed: 'You may certainly write in running script; as long as it is written by your own hand, that is sufficient.' Thereafter, when Qian Chenqun composed responses to imperial poems and presented albums of his works, he followed the imperial instruction and used running script throughout. The Emperor greatly admired his handwriting and praised his calligraphic style as 'aged and vigorous.'" [1] At the age of sixty-eight, Qian Chenqun explained to the Qianlong Emperor that his eyesight had deteriorated and that his hands trembled due to his advanced age. The imperial instruction issued by the Qianlong Emperor removed the conventional requirement that such elegant writings and commemorative compositions presented to the court had to be executed in regular script, thereby providing the institutional conditions for the formation of Qian Chenqun's late "aged and vigorous" calligraphic style.

The Qianlong Emperor praised Qian Chenqun's running-cursive script for maintaining vigor despite old age and for its natural execution, demonstrating his deep appreciation of Qian Chenqun's calligraphy. In addition, Liang Shizheng, a contemporary court official, once remarked to Qian Chenqun's son Qian Rucheng: "Your father's calligraphy has become increasingly plain and unsophisticated, yet increasingly mature and seasoned." [5] The contemporary evaluation of Qian Chenqun's calligraphy as "aged and vigorous" corresponded closely with his own descriptions of his state of writing. In the colophon of his transcription of Diamond Sutra completed in the twenty-fifth year of the Qianlong reign (1760), Qian Chenqun wrote of himself: "After the age of sixty, my eyesight became dim and my hands began to tremble, making it impossible for me to write regular script. When I was summoned for an audience at the side palace, I reported this matter to the Emperor, and I was fortunate to receive His Majesty's enlightened understanding. Over the past more than ten years, the humble works I have respectfully presented, numbering no fewer than eighty or ninety thousand characters, have all been written in running-cursive script." This demonstrates that even in his later years, Qian Chenqun continued to produce a large quantity of works presented to the emperor for official occasions, and that these works were all executed in running-cursive script. As a court literary official, Qian Chenqun had extensive opportunities to practice running-cursive calligraphy. For example, Volume 32 of Supplement to the Poetry Collection of Xiangshu Studio records: "In the thirty-sixth year of the Qianlong reign (1771), the Empress Dowager's eightieth birthday was approaching, and the Emperor issued an edict to conduct the eastern inspection ceremony. In late February, the Emperor stayed temporarily in Dezhou. At that time, Qian Chenqun's family members happened to present Eulogy for Ascending Mount Tai to Offer Blessings, as well as the imperial poems composed in response and the accompanying inscriptions and postscripts from the previous year, which had been respectfully transcribed into albums and presented to the Emperor." [5] Qian Yiji's Chronological Biography of Grand Secretary Wenduan Qian Chenqun likewise records: "Qian Chenqun composed responses to forty-four poems by the Qianlong Emperor on The Imperial Visit to the Mountain Resort for Escaping the Summer Heat. He also inscribed forty-eight poems on Landscape and Flower Paintings by Zou Yigui, composed a twenty-rhyme poem entitled Poems on the Beginning of Summer, and wrote respectful postscripts on various albums of poetry and paintings." [1] These records reveal the frequency and depth of poetic and artistic exchanges between the emperor and his minister. These calligraphic works demonstrate that although Qian Chenqun was unable to write regular script due to trembling hands in his later years, he was still capable of producing a large volume of running-cursive calligraphy, providing important evidence for understanding his emperor-minister interaction with the Qianlong Emperor.

In addition to composing poetry in response to imperial works, Qian Chenqun also received many visitors who came to request his calligraphy. Volume 8 of Collected Works of Xiangshu Studio records: "Throughout his life, Qian Chenqun had a particular fondness for ancient paper. When he left the capital due to illness in those years, the ancient paper he carried with him was sufficient for ten years of use. Recently, however, his supply had once again become insufficient. Whenever someone came to request his calligraphy, if he saw that the paper brought by them was coarse and inferior, he would set it aside and refuse to write. After the requesters repeatedly pleaded with him, Qian Chenqun would finally search through a worn-out box for an old brush whose bristles had already become blunt, and casually scribble a few words simply to fulfill their request. The room would become crowded with onlookers, while those seeking his calligraphy would proudly say: 'I have the ability to obtain a handwritten work by Mr. Qian Chenqun. The brush and ink are of fine quality, and it is truly gratifying that he has written on ancient paper!' At that time, Qian Chenqun had only inferior paper and worn-out brushes, which was like the renowned general Li Guang being asked to command a group of weak soldiers who could hardly be deployed; it was truly a difficult task for him." [3] This account demonstrates that people seeking Qian Chenqun's calligraphic works came to his residence in an unending stream, and that such extensive opportunities for calligraphic practice also constituted an important factor in the formation of his late calligraphic style.

The admiration for Qian Chenqun's calligraphy among his contemporaries can also be seen in the attitude of the official Hu Jitang toward his works. Whenever Hu obtained a casually written piece by Qian Chenqun, he would have it carefully mounted and preserved as a sign of his appreciation. Moved by this gesture, Qian Chenqun responded with a poem in Volume 36 of Supplement to the Poetry Collection of Xiangshu Studio: "How could my calligraphy ever compare with the letters of former masters? The newly bestowed model calligraphies from the imperial collection are even more exquisite and unparalleled. I have merely spent the long summer days continuously practicing calligraphy by the pond, accumulating so many exercises that I should be able to present you with several large scrolls of characters as thick as a cow's waist." [5] By invoking the allusion of Zhang Zhi, the Eastern Han

calligrapher known for his diligent practice by the pond, Qian Chenqun used this reference to describe his own uninterrupted calligraphic practice during the summer months. The entire poem adopts a humorous tone, fully revealing his modest temperament and the refined elegance of a Confucian official. Later, Qian Chenqun again sent a poem in response to Hu Jitang, writing: "My calligraphic style has undergone repeated changes and transformations. Now, at an age of decline, I simply write freely, only feeling that my wrist has become unfamiliar and beyond my full control." [5] Although such expressions were words of modesty, they also revealed the fact that his calligraphic style had undergone multiple transformations. What is particularly intriguing is that the very weakness he self-mockingly described as his "unfamiliar wrist" ultimately contributed to the distinctive charm of his late running-cursive calligraphy.

Qian Chenqun's late running-cursive calligraphic style was based on the foundation of Zhao Mengfu's tradition, yet ultimately developed a distinctive character of its own. This transformation was related to his physiological limitations of blurred eyesight and trembling hands, which made it difficult for him to write regular script. The Qianlong Emperor specially permitted him to use running-cursive script when composing works presented to the court, allowing him sufficient opportunities for practice during the process of composing poetry in response to imperial works. Meanwhile, benefiting from his position as a close attendant and trusted court official, as well as his frequent poetic and artistic exchanges with the Qianlong Emperor, the admiration of his contemporaries for his calligraphy also provided continuous motivation for his creative practice. Under the combined influence of these multiple factors, his late calligraphic style ultimately received the Qianlong Emperor's evaluation of "aged and vigorous".

4. Conclusion

During the Qianlong reign, when literary inquisitions were widespread, Qian Chenqun was undoubtedly fortunate compared with many contemporary court literary officials. The Qianlong Emperor's trust in him was largely attributable to the simplicity and integrity of his family tradition. With the assistance of the Qianlong Emperor and his collector friends, Qian Chenqun was able to extensively view the renowned calligraphic works of ancient masters, greatly broadening his artistic vision. The Qianlong Emperor even specially permitted him to present works written in running-cursive script and personally bestowed upon him the evaluation of "aged and vigorous". Qian Chenqun's experience reveals that in the late imperial period, the calligraphic styles of court literary officials were products shaped through the combined forces of imperial aesthetics, political requirements, and individual physical conditions.

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