

Wang Xizhi  
王羲之

*Betty Tram*



- 303 AD - 361 AD
- Born in Linyi (臨沂), Shandong (山東) Province
- Grew up in present-day Shaoxing (紹興), Zhejiang (浙江)

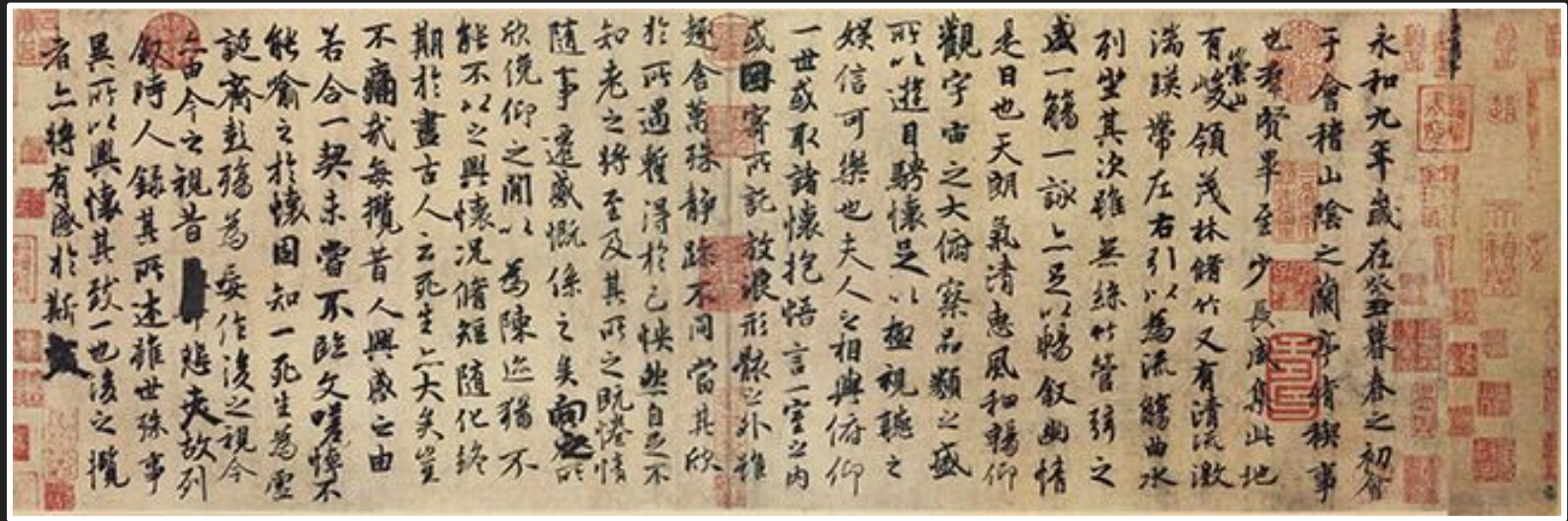




- Learned calligraphy from Wei Shuo or Lady Wei (衛夫人) starting at age 7
- Excelled in semi-cursive script
- Many believe his work is priceless
- Revered as the Sage of Calligraphy
- No original work remain today

Following the fall of the Han dynasty, Wang Xizhi fled south and settled in the Yangzi River region.





- Most famous work was the Preface to the Orchid Pavilion manuscript (353 AD)
- The preface of a collection of poems written by poets gathering at Lanting (蘭亭, Orchid Pavilion)
- Original is lost, but there are fine tracing copies
- Beloved that Emperor Taizong buried with original copy





七十歲瑞翁若麟寫









- In 2010, small Tang dynasty reproduction of his calligraphy scrolls on silk with 4 lines sold in China for ¥308 million RMB (\$48 million).
- The scroll originally had 9 lines but was torn into parts





- Qian Xuan (錢選) painting titled “Watching Geese from the Orchid Pavilion”
- Remembered for his hobby, rearing geese
- Learned the key of how to turn wrist while writing by observation of geese moving their necks



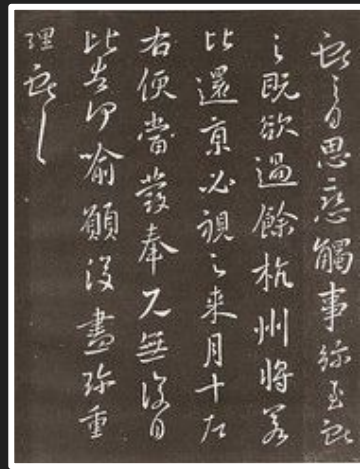
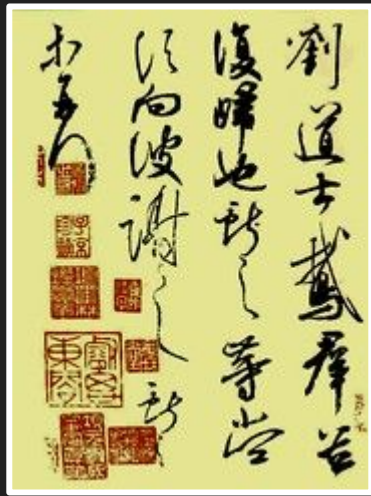
- One story goes that Wang XiZhi frequently dipped his brush and ink-stone in pond.
- Over time, water of pond turned black
- Shows effect he made into practicing calligraphy







- Said to be laid back and informal
- Father-in-law chose his as the right husband for his daughter
- Married Chi Xuan, daughter of government official
- Raised seven children



- Wang XiZhi had seven children
- All children were notable calligraphers
- Most distinguished calligrapher was his youngest son: Wang Xianzhi (王獻之)
- Style more fluid than his father's
- Invented one-stroke cursive script



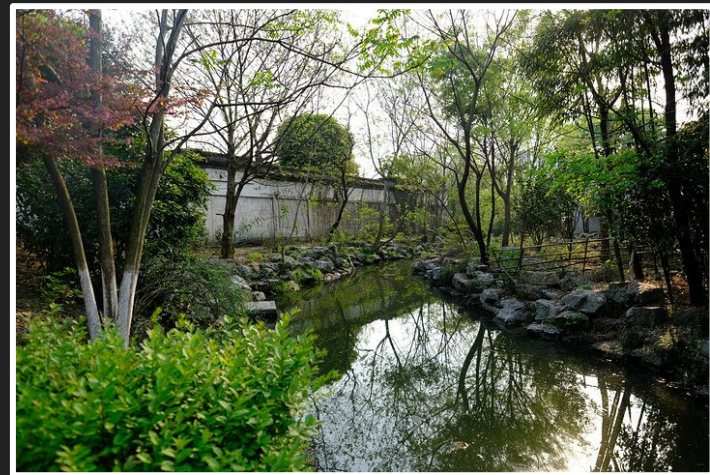
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也  
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Wang Xizhi, *On the Seventeenth* (letter)

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以系乃相事復思  
慟泣及即其書自命  
於時人自慶尋  
古年

Wang Xianzhi, *On the Twelfth* (letter)







- Innovator of the Ages
- Sage of Calligraphy
- The Greatest Chinese Calligrapher

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