Dating "Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters" in Taipei National Palace Museum

Reiji Yamashina and 2009/9/21 (this English version)

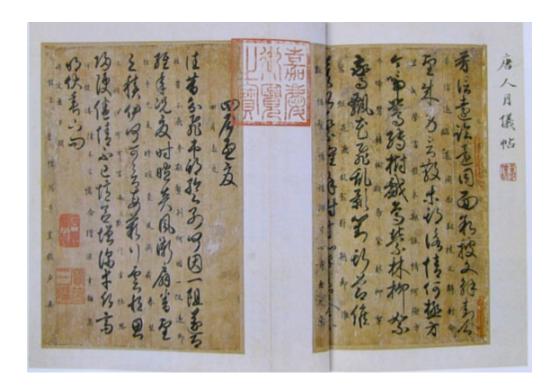
Abstracts

"Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters" in Taipei National Palace Museum has no evidence for the attribution to Tang dynasty Calligraphy.

I offer some indirect evidences to support the attribution.

- 1. The Paper of "Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters" has embossed scale lines should be the special sort which several famous calligraphy copies of Wan-chi-shi. It supports its 8th century date.
- 2. The text likes Manuscript Fragments in Calligraphy Museum, Tokyo from Turfan, north west China. The text also likes Dunhuang manuscripts "Corresponding Letter Format" which are the synopsis of works from various "Yue I" dated from late Six dynasties to early Tang.
- 3. Unusual form characters in this small square script characters suggest the date Tang dynasty.

Introduction



Taipei National Palace Museum has "Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters"(唐人 十二月朋友相聞書). Ink on paper. album format. Calligraphy paper height about 25cm. Album folio size: 31.2 x 49cm. A Cursive Characters Calligraphy Model accompanied with small square style characters. It was also called as "Yue I Tue"(月儀帖). From early Ming, scholars have regarded the date Tang dynasty, but there isn't any evidence to support the date.

I try to think the date on the quality of paper, the text, and the unusual small square characters in it.

Quality of paper

It is known that papers of copies of Wan chi-shi calligraphies (喪乱帖 孔侍中帖) stored in Japan have several millimeters intervals vertical lines. The creases or lines are not drawn by ink or color, but produced by folding, pressing, embossing or another method as watermark. I found paper of the Twelve month letter format—should—be the same sort of 孔侍中帖, observing it in National Palace Museum, at 19th and 20th of October 2008. It is grey and have seldom yellow. There might be a relation of the lighting, too, but it is against to yellow paper of 文賦 by 陸東之 which was next to it. It is easy for yellow by all means in the photograph illustration to overlook the paper quality.



Twelve Months'
Corresponding Letters



孔侍中帖

As 孔侍中帖, here and there, the character damage along the line can be seen in it, too. There is not any 節筆[SEPPITU](stroke obstructed by folded/edged line of paper) along the lines.

Paper with such ruled lines/creases are common in 7th to 8th century China and Japan, which is demonstrated on many examples in manuscripts in SHOSOIN Collection, Nara, Japan. Ignoring production method, on external appearance, I conveniently classified them to 4 groups.

- I: Ink strokes are damaged along the line at intervals of about 8mm. There is no 節筆
 [SEPPITU] along the line. All are used to copy old masterpiece calligraphy. Examples: 孔侍中帖. 喪乱帖.
- II: Lines are all creases of convex, and ink strokes are obstructed by creases. The interval of about 8mm. Examples: 光明皇后: 楽毅論, 光定戒牒, 李嶠雑詠. Many are presumed to be written in Japan.
- III:It is width of about 25-30mm and there are creases or lines by spatula. It often writes between the ruled lines. **節筆**[SEPPITU] sometimes happen. Ink strokes damages along lines are seldom found. Examples: 書譜, 正倉院文書続集別集造石山寺文書.
- IV: Both such ruled lines/creases and Indian ink ruled lines were done. Characters are written between lines of about 1cm at intervals. Example: 御物 賀知章孝経

I summarize in this table:

Туре	Example	[SEPPITU]	line interval	Stroke damaged along line	Line by INK
I	孔侍中帖	None	8mm	Somewhere	none
II	光定戒牒	Frequent	8mm	none	None
III	書譜	Often	About 24mm	none	none
IV	御物孝経	?	About 10mm	- Paper damage	Done along all Creases/vertical lines

Here, I think only about the type I. This type is used only for coping masterpiece calligraphies. Examples detected:

- 喪乱帖 (Japan Imperial Collection)
- 孔侍中帖(Japan Maeda Foundation)
- 妹至帖(Japan)
- 十二月朋友相聞書"Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters"(National Palace Museum, Taipei)
- 寒切帖(天津芸術博物館)

寒切帖 looks a little wide intervals. Good photographs might show the fact in future.

Thus, the cursive style part of 十二月朋友相聞書 might be a copy after old calligraphy masterpiece.

I think Usage of Type I paper suggests the date 7-8th century...

Comparison between the text and manuscripts from china western area

It is necessary to examine the text which shows the upper bound age of the original calligraphy. Because obsolete Letter Format Textbooks tend to be annulled, differs from 1000 characters prose, the text date suggests the original calligraphy date.

About the text, I supplement January, February, and May text from "Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters" in 鬱崗斎法帖, and I call the revised text 故宮+鬱崗斎本.







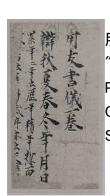




I've hound that similar sentences are in the manuscript hand scroll in Calligraphy Museum, Taito Ward, Tokyo. It is a length volume handscroll pasted of 15 fragments: 300x2903mm, No.130 月令 in 台東区立書道博物館所蔵 中村不折旧蔵禹域墨書集成. It is attributed to be unearthed in Turfan. Three kinds of letter format textbooks are included in this volume: 相文卷一本,十二月朝?(翰?) 聞書,and Letter format of an uncertain title. The last is only a small segment, but partially likes the Letter format 朋友相命 excavated in Dunhuang,described later. The text 十二月朝?(翰?) 聞書 resembles to the text 故宫+鬱崗斎本 and both titles are close. See Appendices Large Plates.

Differences of sentences with the text of Calligraphy Museum Ms. and the text 故宮+鬱崗斎本 are as follows. About literal details, see Appendices Table I.

- It is almost the same in the title on remaining part.
- Most is the same in January.
- Most is the same in February excluding the end.
- Most is the same in the remaining portion of March.
- Roughly, it is the same though there is a difference in the remaining portion of April.
- In the remaining portion of May, it is the same as 3/4 or more excluding the end part.
- Half words and phrases are the same in the remaining portion of June.
- Roughly, it is the same though there is a difference in the remaining portion of July.
- Roughly, it is the same though there is a difference in the remaining portion of August.
- Complete different texts in September
- In October, same in first 6 phrases. Calligraphy museum text has more four phrases interrupted after 6th phrases. and most is the same afterwards to end.
- In November, Calligraphy Museum text has the difference in the end part and two supplement phrases at end.
- Complete different texts in December



Professor 王三慶(2004) of Taiwan reconstructed "Corresponding Letter Format" 朋友書儀 from several Dunhuang transcripts and discovered it contains synopsis of "Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters". The main text is Stein5660, and, next, PelliotChinois3375,2505 though the transcript is Stein 5650,6180,5472, 361v, Pelliot Chinois 3375,2505, 2679,3466,3420, 4989v, one of Luo Zhenyu collection, and a Shanghai library book.. This image is a part of Stein6180. The 2nd part of Corresponding

故宮+鬱崗斎	Calligraphy Museum Ms.	Reply parts of Dunhuang Ms.
Title	Title	Title
January	January	January
February	February	February
March	March	March
April	April	April
May	May	May
June	June	June
July	July	July
August	August	August
September	September	September
October	October	October
November	November	November
December	December	December

Calligraphy Museum manuscript and the Dunhuang manuscript are nearer than 故宮+鬱崗斎本. It is distinct in September and December divisions and the latter part of October and November division.

Professor 王三慶(2004) studies the location names in it on the historical geography, and concluded the text are assumed to be produced in about ACE742-755. However, there is partially a possibility of going back before that, because this text should be edited work assembled ancients.

I think the text 故宮+鬱崗斎本 should be trendy in 7th to 8th century, and not before 6th century, because such letter format textbook become obsolete and should be thrown away.

Another fragment attached in Calligraphy Museum scroll is similar to "朋友相命": third part of Dunhuang manuscript. See Appendices image and Table II. Because such incident cannot happen in Forgery manuscripts, I think the Calligraphy museum one be genuine. The manuscript scroll contains poems:天安寺疏圃堂詩 and 會三教詩 by 梁武帝, and 経琵琶峡詩 by 梁簡文帝. This suggests the date early Tang dynasty.

Small square unusual characters

A lot of people praise the small square characters. 王文治 praised them in his attached inscription very much. 任政(ACE1985) described "I gained profit very much when greatly expanding them and learning it" in the calligraphy periodical in China. The actual thing is lustrous further in the illustration though it grows dim. The style of penmanship looks like Dunhuang manuscript calligraphy PelliotChinois2644 (ACE672) and PelliotChinois2547 (ACE747) in Biblioteque Nationale Paris.



As 王競雄(2008) suggested, it has a lot of unusual form characters and they suggest the age. I pointed another 3 characters:辭, 希, and 帰 than he pointed.

Example of unusual letterform of 辭:

- 敦煌 書儀 6th year of 天宝 PelliotChinois2547
- 魏洛州刺史元秀墓誌銘 正光 4th year ACE523, Feb,27th
- 李憲墓誌銘 元象 1st, year ACE538, Feb.,24th
- 唐儀同三司王護墓誌銘 貞觀 11th year ACE637, FEB, 29th
- 。 陸東之 文賦
- 。 玉板十三行
- 。 歐陽醇 行書千字文

- Example of unusual letterform of 希:
 - 唐 李輔光 墓誌銘 元和 10 年(815)4 月 25 日
 - 。 敦煌俗字譜

The usage example is few.

- Example of unusual letterform of 帰:
 - 魏冀州刺史揚鳳翔墓誌銘 武定 5 年(547)5 月 24 日
 - 周左衛翊衛天官常選梁日敬墓誌銘 萬歳通天元年(696)5月 20日
 - 。 敦煌俗字譜
 - 。 虞世南 孔子廟堂碑
 - 。 伝 虞世南 破邪論序
 - 伝 褚遂良 倪寛賛

The usage example is fewer

- - 。 敦煌 書儀 天宝6年 PelliotChinois2547
 - 。 書道博物館本「月令」

There are a lot of usage examples.

- Example of unusual letterform of 怨:
 - 。 董美人墓誌
 - 書道博物館本「月令」
 - 唐抄本 春秋経伝集解(藤井有鄰館)

There are a lot of usage examples.

The left part of 蝉 has one stroke more: There are a lot of usage examples.

These letterforms were done in latter half of Northern Wei to early Tang Dynasty age.

Examples support the date of small square characters Tang dynasty. If so, it is the oldest example of applying small square characters to Cursive Character Calligraphy Model.

Suppose the age of small square characters ACE713-755, the date of copying the cursive style model should be a little before. The original model should be a classic antique art at that time, because it was copied for model. The original masterpiece lost should be one hundreds years or more older. Hence, it might be possible that 智永 wrote the original calligraphy, as 王競雄(2008) thought.

Examples of unusual character of "帰" character are rare, though it is as a semi-cursive style since Song. I remark that the rare examples—are in "孔子廟堂碑" and "破邪論序" both by 虞世南 attributed. I feel small square style by 虞世南 might be—such style. Credible evidence to

imagine small square style by 虞世南 may be PelliotChinois2644 (ACE672) which was supervised by a son of 虞世南. I bury some small characters of "Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters" into PelliotChinois2644. There is resemblance; slender feeling of "10" etc.



The unusual form characters of "辭" are found lesser usage examples of the epitaph stones comparatively than frequent in great famous calligraphy masterpieces.



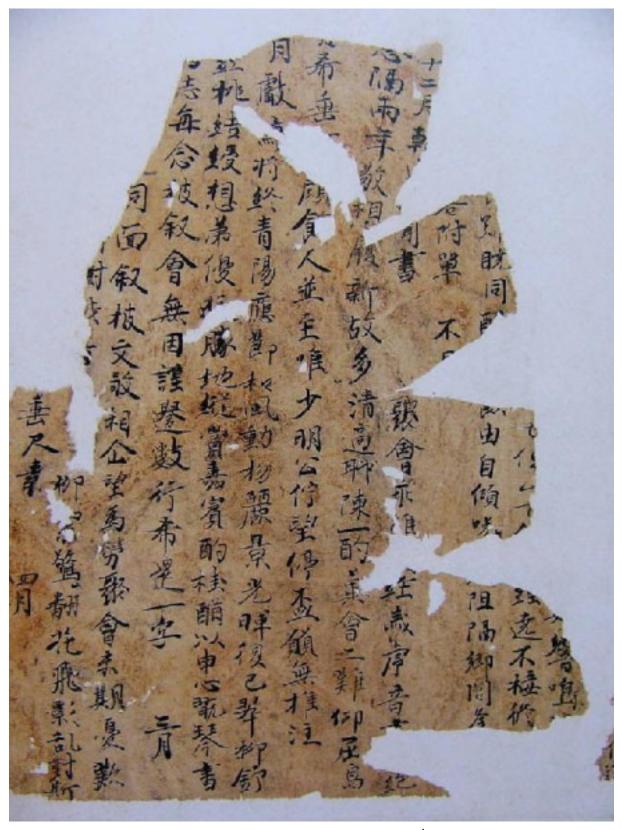
Because it was not possible to consider it especially on the history of calligraphy, I neglect unusual characters of "希", which is the rarest among epitaph stones and real calligraphies.

Conclusion:

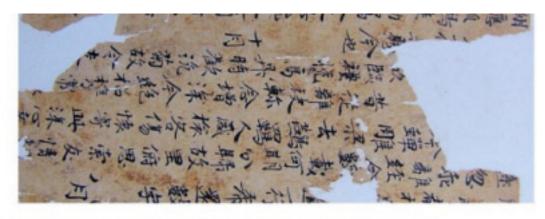
I think the date of "Twelve Months' Corresponding Letters" (National Palace Museum) should be Tang dynasty. The cursive style model was copied from the original masterpiece. It is not certain the same calligrapher produced Cursive style calligraphy and small square style characters. The original masterpiece copied may be late 6th century to early 7th century.

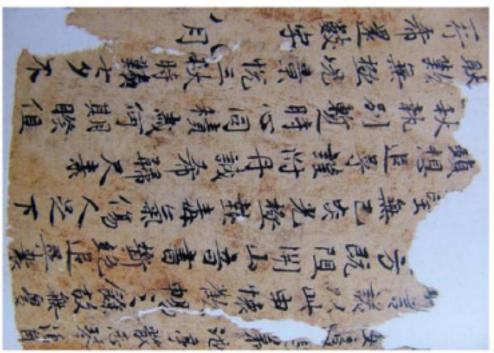
Reference:

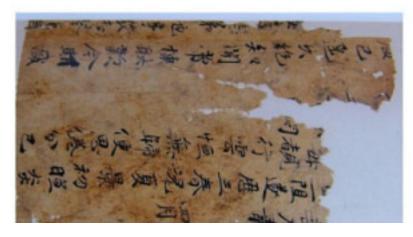
- 王競雄, 芳信遠臨一唐人十二月朋友相聞書書法述介, 故宮文物月刊, no.307, p89-94, October, 2008, 台北
- 二玄社, 書跡名品叢刊 第 150 回 月儀帖三種, 1983 年 6 月 30 日版(1970 年 6 月 30 日初版),
 東京
- 伏見仲敬, 月儀帖三種, 書品, 第139号, 昭和38年4月, 東京
- 上海人民美術出版社、藝苑テツ英 第44期、1993年2月、
- 台東区立書道博物館,台東区立書道博物館所蔵中村不折旧蔵禹域墨書集成(中)(文部科学省科学研究費特定領域研究〈東アジア出版文化の研究〉研究成果・東アジア善本叢刊・第2集),2005年3月,東京
- 王三慶,故宮蔵本「唐人十二月相聞書」研究,遨遊在中古文化的場域一六朝唐宋学術検討会論文集 p385-433,台湾大学中文系・成功大学中文系「六朝唐宋学術検討会」編輯小組,10th of November, 2004, 里仁書局,台北
- 王三慶 黄亮友 朋友書儀一巻研究、敦煌学、第25輯、2004年9月,敦煌学会編集,樂学書局有限公司,台北
- 任政, 唐人 月儀帖 簡介, 書法, 1985年 第四期, 上海書画出版社, 上海
- 饒宗頤 編集, 敦煌書法叢刊 第18 碎金,1983年, 二玄社, 東京



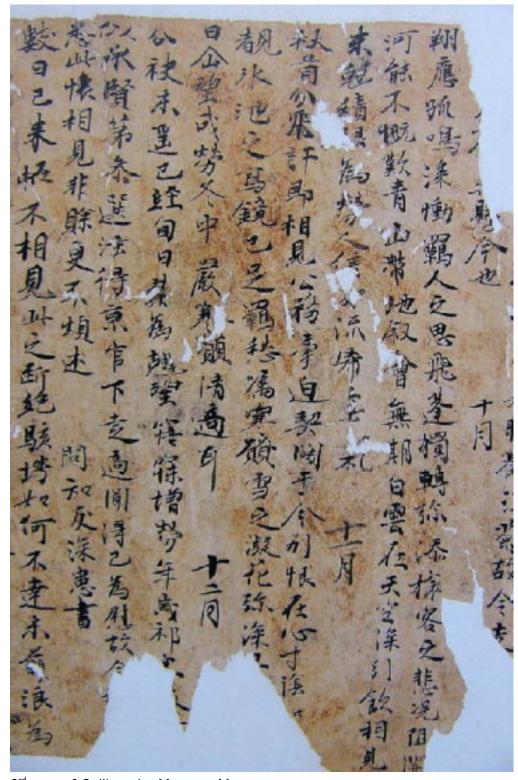
Opening of Twelve month Letter Format in YueLi Manuscript (Taito ward Calligraphy Museum)



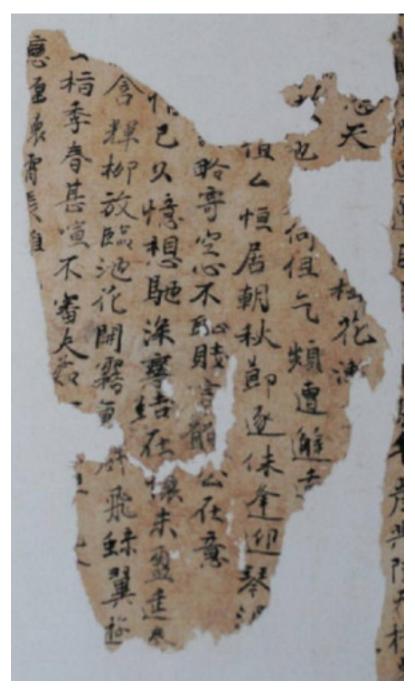




2nd part of Calligraphy Museum Ms.



3rd part of Calligraphy Museum Ms.



Another fragment attached in Calligraphy Museum Scroll

Table I,

lable I,		
故宮+鬱崗斎本	書道博物館	敦煌 十二月相弁文の返書部分
十二月朋友相聞書	十二月朝?□□聞書	十二月相辮文
正月孟春	(欠)	
聚會乖離 経今数歳	聚會乖離?経歳序	聚會乖離 雖今数歳
音書断絶 忽隔両年	音書□絶 忽?隔両年	音書断絶 忽隔両年
敬想履新 故當請適	敬想履新 故多清適	敬想履新 故當請適
聊陳一酌 冀叙二難	聊陳一酌 冀會二難	聊陳一酌 冀叙二難
仰屈高賢 希垂下顧	仰屈高賢?希垂下?顧	仰屈高賢 希垂下顧
餘人尽至 唯待明公	餘人並至 唯待明公	餘人尽至 唯待明公
佇望光儀 顧無推距	佇望停盃 顧無推注	佇望光儀 顧無推距
二月仲春	口月	
献歳将終 青陽応節	献歳将終 青陽応節	歳暮将終 青陽応節
和風動物 麗景光暉	和風動物 麗景光暉	和風動納 麗景光暉
復比翠柳 繇鱗紅桃	復己柳舒 □□紅?桃	加以翠柳 舒鱗低桃
結緩想弟 憂遊勝地	結綬想弟 優遊勝地	結緩想俊 遊縁地
縦賞嘉賓	縦賞嘉賓	縦賞嘉賓
酌桂醋以申心	酌桂(ミセケチ)醋以申心	酌桂[酉胥]以申心
玩琴書而寫志	玩琴書□寫?志	玩琴書而寫志
無年被叙 聚會無期	毎年被叙 會無因	毎年被叙 聚會無因
謹遣一行 希還数字	謹遣一行 希還数字	謹遣数行 希還一字
三月季春	(欠)	
芳信遠臨 還同面敘	(前欠)同面敘	其信遠臨 還同面敘
披文解封 企望成勞	披文解封 企望為勞	披文敬想 企望誠勞
言散未期 詠情何極	聚會未期 憂嘆(下欠)	聚會未期 情恨何極?
方今啼賏 鳥轉樹	樹?)	方今遊峰遶樹
戲鳥縈林 柳絮驚飄	戯?□□□ 柳絮驚翻	戲鳥縈林 翠柳摇風
花飛亂影 對斯節候	花飛亂影 對斯□□	低桃欄影 對斯節納
歎恨繁懷 謹附寸心 希垂尺素	(前欠)垂尺素	歎逾何窮? 謹附丹誠 申素何悉
四月孟夏	四月	
往昔分飛		蘘者分飛
本期暫別 何因一阻	(前欠)一阻	本言暫別 何期一阻
遂即經年 况夏時暄炎	遂歴三春 況夏景初暄炎	遂歴三春 況夏景新臨
光風漸扇 眷望之積	(欠)	炎風漸扇 春望之積
伊何可言	(欠)	伊何可言
每歎行雲 恆思歸便	毎覩行雲 恒無歸便思	每睹行雲 恆贍風鳥
倦情不已 憶念增深	倦分已 (以下欠)	思眷不已 憶念增深

幸願高明 伏垂下問	(前欠)問	延顧白雲 希垂一字
五月仲夏		
分張未遠 離處已遙	(前欠)處?已遙	分張未遠 離念已遙
久絶知聞 常懐歎満	久絶知聞 常懐耿歎	自絶郤聞 恆懐耿歎
今斯盛夏 湿熱莫常	今斯盛 (下欠)	當思盛夏 暑熱異常
不審此來 如何賞納	(おそらく欠)	不審此來 如何逝分?
想弟池亭散志 琴酒日娯	想?弟池亭散志 琴酒自娯	想池亭散楽 琴酒日歓
		寫望登楼 被襟悦志
佇帰言諾 已以此申懐忩卒	(前欠) 帰?言諾 以此申懐歓	毎念言語 以此申懐歓
豈敢多具	暢之餘故無憂	娯商之餘 倖存相問
六月季夏	(欠)	
自從分袂 各處遊方	(前欠)方	自從分袂 各處遐方
既阻關河 音書斷絕	既阻開山 音書斷絕	既阻關山 音書斷絕
近間往信 敬想為勞	追尋囊	追尋蘘日 敬想為勞
言展未期 歎善無以	(前欠)望無己	言叙未期 歎望無已
炎光極熱 毒氣傷人	炎光極熱 毒氣傷人	炎光極熱 毒氣傷人
足下此時 如何安適	足下 (以下欠)	足下此時 如何安適?
為奉言敘 竟想追尋	(前欠)想追尋	久乖言展 鎮想追尋
謹遣一行 希垂玉封	謹附丹青 希帰尺素	聊附丹誠 希垂素箚
七月孟秋	(欠)	
離分一日 情甚三秋	(前欠) 秋	離居一日 情甚三秋
時別蹔時 心同積歲	執別蹔時 心同積歲	執別暫時 心同積歲
何期睽阻 言會具然	何期睽阻 言會開然	言念問然
憂慮之勞 不能已以	憂慮口勞 不能耿歎無極	憂慮之勞 耿歎無極
況公景悅三秋 時歡七夕	況公景悅三秋 時歡?七夕	景悅三秋 時歡此分
不任延想 望者・見思人	不勝近望 覩(以下欠)	不勝延望 睹物
謹遣數行 希還一字	(前欠) 遣一行 希還数字	遣數行 希垂一字
八月仲秋	八月	
適憶奉辞 経今数歳	遠?忽乖離 経今数載	倏忽乖離 俄経数歳
何期分袂。遂絕知聞。	何期分帰	何期分散 遂絕知聞。
企望白雲。心歸故理。	故里	仰望白雲 心歸故理
俯思素友。情想披尋。	俯思 索友 情? □□□□	俯思素友。情想披尋。
況高樹吟蝉。彫堂去鸞。	(前欠) 吟蝉。彫梁去[燕+鳥]。	況秋樹吟蝉。彫堂去鸞。
 羈遊盛思。獨敘傷懷。	羈人感??。客傷懐。	羈人感思。旅客傷嗟
寄此深心。希存來問。	寄此深心。幸(後欠)	寄此深心。倖存來問。

九月季秋	(欠)	
奉辭言展 遂隔數旬	昔従離[示央]? [車尓]念増深	自従分[示央]? 軫念弥深
時候徂秋 能無馳仰	今絶招携 常(下欠)	久絶招攜 常懐耿歎
青山帶地 敘念無期	(前欠)臨	況白蔵将謝 玄英欲臨
況阻關河 彌增翹軫	體悅高昇 時歓	體悦昇高 時歓液對
不任延想 佇 望者?見思賢	況菊故今 (下欠)	故令去屈 幸即相過
謹付一行 代申面及		佇望停盃 使無懸念
十月孟冬	十月	
翔鷹孤鳴 深動羈人之思	翔應孤鳴 深慟羈人之思	翔應孤鳴 口動羈人之思
飛蓬獨轉 更傷旅客之悲	飛蓬獨轉 弥添旅客之悲	飛蓬獨轉 弥添旅客之悲
況阻關河 能無怨及	況阻關河 能不慨歓	況阻關山 能不慨歓
	青山帯地 叙會無期	青山帯地 叙會無期
	白雲在天 空深引飲	白雲在天 空深引領
相見未晩 積恨為勞	相見未晩 積恨為勞	相見未歇 積恨為勞
信至如流 希歸一扎	人信如流 希垂?一札	人信如流 希垂素箚
十一月 仲冬	十一月	
秋首分飛 許則相見	秋首分飛 許則相見	林首分飛 許則相見
為緣公務 遂闕躬参	公務牽迫 契闊於今	公務牽迫 契闊於今
恨憶労心 寸陰如載	別怨在心 寸陰如?(下欠)	別怨 労 寸陰如載
睹冰池之寫鏡 雲似羈愁	覩冰池之寫鏡 已足羈愁	睹冰池之寫鏡 足以羈湣
属寒雪之凝花 弥添旅思	属寒?雪之凝花 弥添 (下欠)	属寒雪之凝花 弥添憶想
奉面未日 略略修承	(前欠) 日 企望或労	奉面未由 企望誠労
	冬中厳寒 願清適耳	時景厳寒 願当清適
十二月 季冬	十二月	
春首分離 本期兩月	分袂未遙 已経旬日	分袂未遙 已経旬日
如何一別 便阻三冬	口為翹望 寤寐増労	期為翹望 寤寐増労
斷絶音書 無慰勤積	年歳祁寒?(下欠)	年歳祁寒 故當清勝
比加寒風飄雪 等柳絮之驚飛	似承賢第 選口待京官	累蒙芳剳 恵以徳音
不審高賢 何當故理	下走適聞 得已為慰	有愧來文 傳心來問
深思言會 仰望成勞	故今?(欠2,3字) 悉此懐	未由面款 略叙丹誠
馳奉數行 謹佇來問	相見非[貝余] 更不煩述	筆短情深 更不多述
吾前後書 惟此本佳也		

Table II

敦煌本 朋友告命	書道博物館 断片
二月仲春	
梅花漸変	梅花漸□
雲光朗起 散影随時	
仲秋漸喧 不審体内如何	
某乙恒居草室	□乙恒居朝秋 即遂未?逢迎
略記空心 不恥浅言	略記空心 不恥浅言
願公在意	願公在意
三月季春 極喧	(欠)
離情既久 憶想馳深	(前欠)情?既久 憶想馳深
結友在懐 未盈延奉	恋結在懐 未盈延奉
働陽恋節 春景含輝	(前欠) 含輝
柳散臨池 花開霧裡	柳放臨池 花開霧裡?
群飛蝶翼 妙響鳴琴	群飛蝶?翼 遊(下欠)
	季春 甚喧 不審。。