





Calligraphy of Five Blessings




Chinese characters are a treasured symbol of the Chinese nation, and the development of characters is often considered one of the major achievements in the course of human civilization. Chinese characters appeared around 6000 years ago, and among ancient systems of writing in the world, only Chinese characters remain in use today. There are many differing styles of writing Chinese characters, all of which are an individual art. Of all the Chinese characters, 福 (good fortune), 禄 (high salary and a good career), 寿 (longevity), 喜 (happiness), 财 (wealth) are the most auspicious characters, and are thus referred to as the “five blessings”. Since ancient times, the Chinese people have yearned for the five blessings.


福 is an associative compound, the meaning of which is expressed vividly through its character form.  is the oracle bone form of this character, the left side of which is a wine cup held with two hands before a sacrificial altar. Later, the meaning of this character was shifted from “praying for blessings” to “happiness”. The earliest 福 collected in *Good Fortune* is from




an oracle bone from the Shang Dynasty, the earliest form of 福 written by prominent figures is from Huang Xiang in the period of the Three Kingdoms, while the earliest imperial form of 福 was written by Emperor Wen of the Sui Dynasty.

The oracle bone form of 禄 is  which appears as water seeping through a bag on a wood rack. This is used metaphorically to express that only by putting in great effort and passing the imperial examination can a scholar gain a prominent position. The earliest form of 禄 collected in *High Salary* is from an oracle bone from the Shang Dynasty, the earliest form of 禄 written by prominent figures is from Xu Shen in the Han Dynasty, while the earliest imperial form of 禄 was written by Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty.

For the ancient character  its upper section  refers to an old man, while its lower section  indicates a toast to the achieved longevity of a senior citizen with a wine cup. The earliest form of 寿 collected in *Longevity* is from the inscriptions on ancient bronze objects from the Zhou Dynasty, the earliest form of 寿 written by prominent figures is from Huang Xiang during the period of the Three Kingdoms, while the earliest imperial form of 寿 is the seal character engraved on the imperial jade seal of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty.

The oracle bone character of 喜,  appears as a drum placed on a pedestal, which is used to indicate a celebration by playing music. The earliest form of 喜 collected in *Happiness* is from an oracle bone from the Shang Dynasty, the earliest form of 喜 written

by prominent figures is from Xu Shen in the Han Dynasty, while the earliest imperial form of 喜 was written by Emperor Gaozong of the Song Dynasty.

The left part of character 财 is 贝, and the oracle bone form of 贝 is  which appears as two shells. In the ancient times, shells were very rare and were used as currency until the Qin Dynasty, when they were replaced with copper coins. 贝 can be used as a character radical, and any character containing this radical is related to wealth. The earliest form of 财 collected in *Wealth* is from a Han seal (seals made between 206 BC-220 AD), the earliest form of 财 written by prominent figures is from Xu Shen in the Han Dynasty, while the earliest imperial form of 财 was written by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty.

The themes of five blessings run deep within the consciousness of the Chinese nation, and an auspicious life is the common ideal and pursuit of the mankind. In order to carry forward the outstanding cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, we have been dedicated to the research of auspicious cultural artifacts in China for many years. In January 2003, *Designs of Chinese Blessings* (including five volumes: *Good Fortune, High Salary, Longevity, Happiness, and Wealth*) was published, and became widely successful. This series of books has been translated into Korean and Japanese to be distributed in South Korea and Japan respectively, and later into English for the benefit of other international readers. Now its companion book series, *Calligraphy of Chinese Blessings*, has been

released. This series is again composed of five volumes: *Good Fortune, High Salary, Longevity, Happiness, and Wealth*. There are 1760 examples of these five characters 福, 禄, 寿, 喜, 财 collected in this series, 500 of which were written by ourselves based on the research into the oracle bones, inscriptions on ancient bronze objects, lesser seal characters, Han seal characters; the other 1260 of which have been collected from thousands of ancient copybooks for calligraphy by means of ink-rubbing each individual character. In each volume, the characters are arranged in the order of regular script, running script, cursive script, clerical script, seal script, and of the year when it appears, to make character reference and appreciation easier for the reader.

Calligraphy is treasured within the Chinese nation, and one of the most important parts of Chinese culture, which has fully reflected the moral conduct of Chinese scholars for thousands of years. Calligraphy of Chinese Blessings is the epitome of the profound style of Chinese characters. In this series you will not only enjoy calligraphy styles as regular script, running script, cursive script, clerical script, seal script, and appreciate the lingering charm of calligraphy from different schools throughout time, but you will also appreciate the five blessings brought by the five characters 福, 禄, 寿, 喜, 财 to you and your family.