



ELIAN SCRIPT

VARIABLES
&
EVOLUTION

C.C. ELIAN

2025

ELIAN SCRIPT AND ITS STRUCTURAL VARIABLES - BY C.C. ELIAN

Elian script encodes the 26 letters of the Latin alphabet into lines and dots (dashes), which are the same graphic elements used by Asian scripts: Chinese, Japanese, Korean.

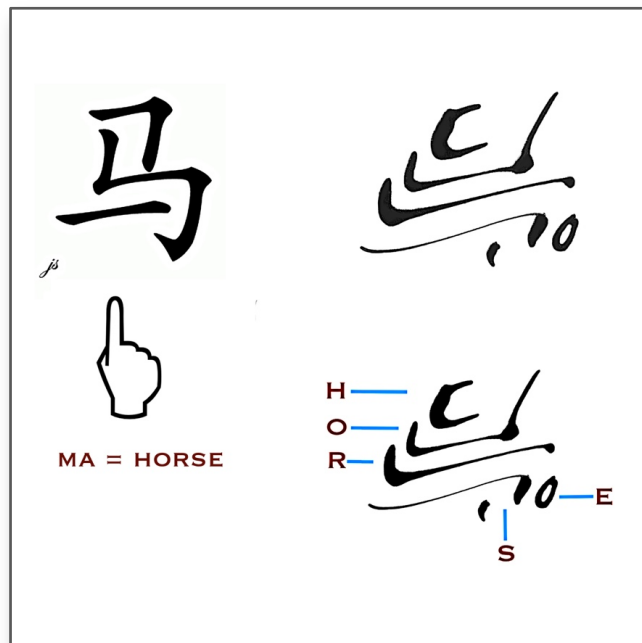
As such, the same calligraphic expression found in these scripts is possible while writing in English, French, Italian, or any Latin alphabet-based language.

Because its structure is based upon the 9-square, tic-tac-toe grid, and because the hardest part is knowing the Latin alphabet, an 8-year-old can learn this system. However, its complexity comes from the quality of a writer's lines and their composition of letters.

The word "Horse" in Chinese and in *Elian* script.

The Chinese logogram is made of soundless lines.

The sections of *Elian* script each represent the letters h-o-r-s-e in sequence

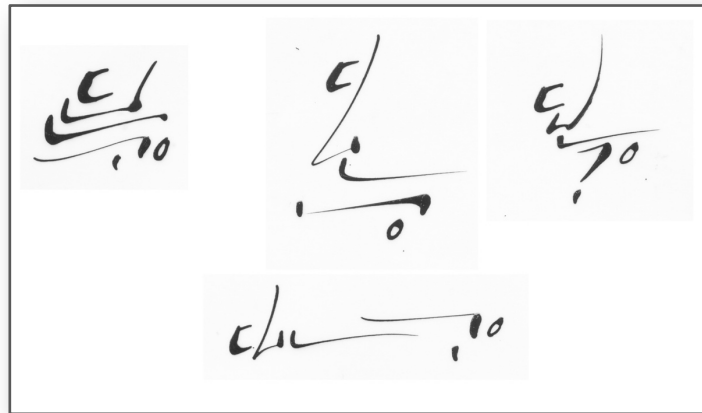


Logograms cannot differ as to number of strokes or their relationship, just as alphabetic letters cannot be written on more than one baseline or shaped differently without being written "wrong".

However, as you will see, *Elian* script's structural principles allow far more freedom than either logograms or Latin letters, all the while using elements of both.

As an example, below are other compositions of the English word "Horse" in *Elian* script. Many more compositions are possible without violating any of the script's rules.

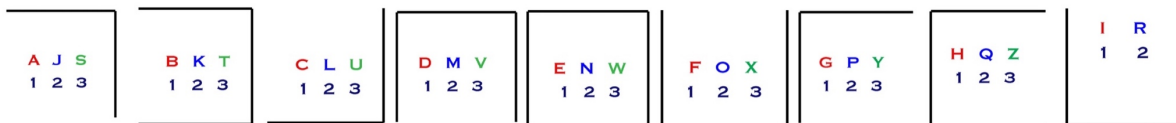
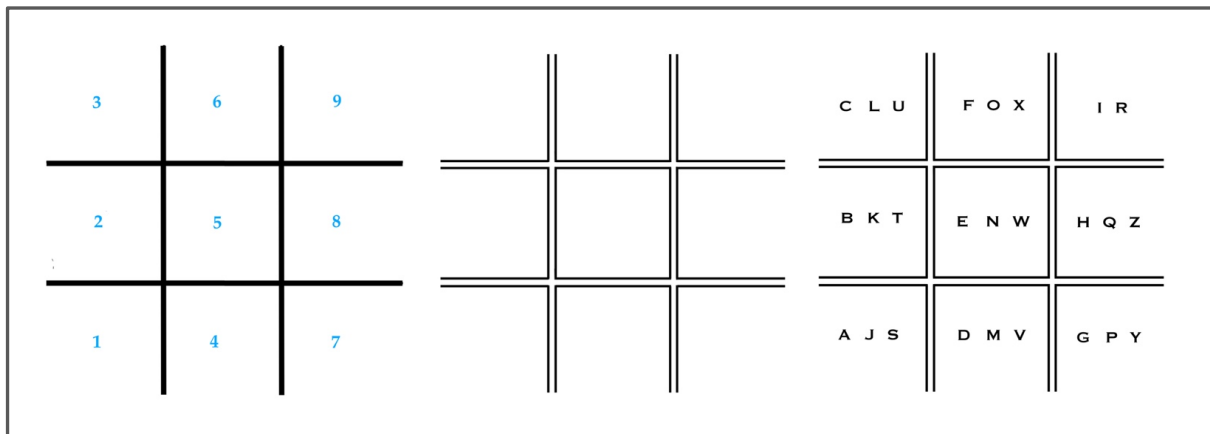
Variations of the English word "Horse" in Elian script. Many others are possible.



HOW TO WRITE IN ELIAN SCRIPT

Elian script is based upon a 9-square grid whose sections codify the 26-letter Latin alphabet.

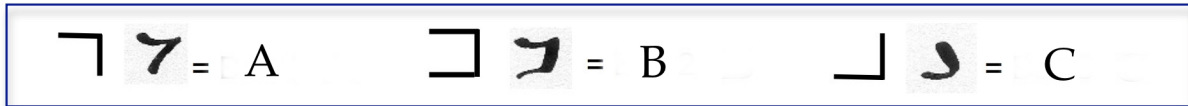
If you isolate the sections, you see that each has a unique configuration from the others. Once we place the letters of the alphabet into the grid, this fact becomes the scaffolding for the script.



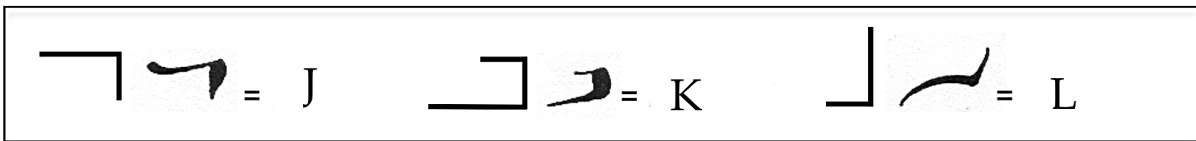
All 9 grid sections showing which letters rest in them.

There are a handful of simple structural rules to differentiate between each of the 3 letters in a given section.

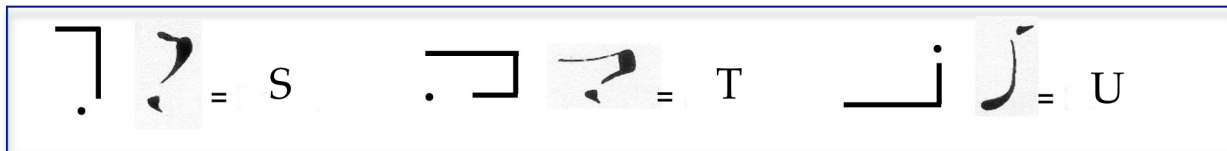
THE SIDES OF THE FIRST LETTER IN A SECTION MUST HAVE THE SAME LENGTH. In practice one side might be a smidgeon longer, it's the intent to make it equal that needs to be clear:



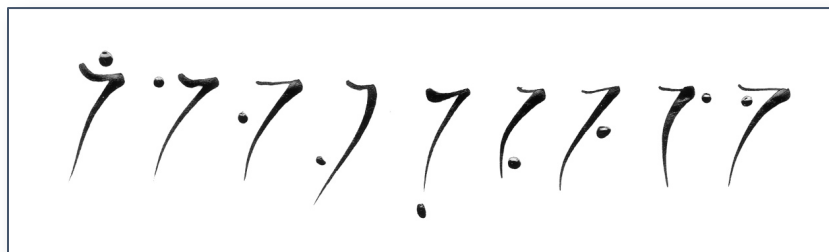
THE SECOND LETTER HAS AT LEAST ONE OF ITS SIDES LENGTHENED; it can be any or all the sides. The writer decides the lines' lengths, and lines can be at an angle.



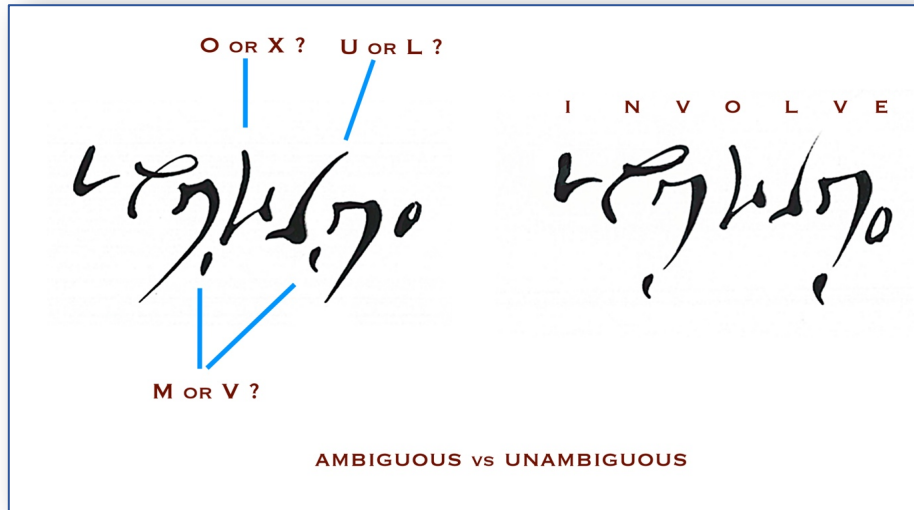
THE THIRD CYCLE LETTER HAS AT LEAST ONE SIDE LENGTHENED AND ASSOCIATED DOT.



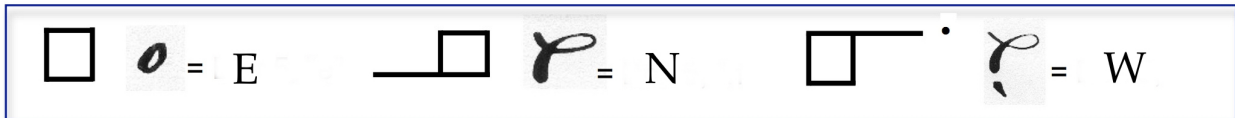
It doesn't matter exactly where the dot goes if it's clear to which section it belongs; below one version of the letter "S".



The key is to avoid ambiguity; as illustrated with the following word "involve". It must be clear where the dot belongs:



The letters in the center box can be circular because that maintains the section's shape as an enclosed space.



The 90-degree illustrations are only to establish the structural foundations because in practice the lines of the sections are fluid. The system allows for this because the "hinge" of where the sections' lines join doesn't change when any of the lines swing away from 90 degrees.



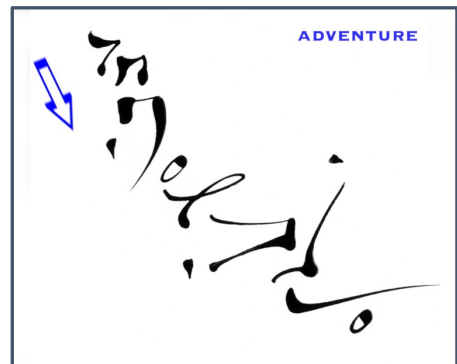
Section No. 1 - Letters "A - J -

The letters can be on multiple baselines—as many as there are letters—which makes dozens of unique compositions possible:

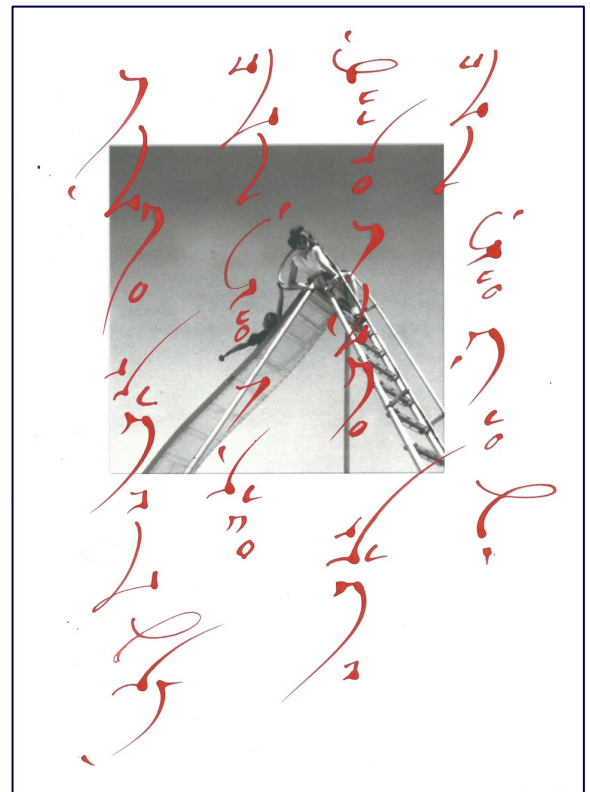
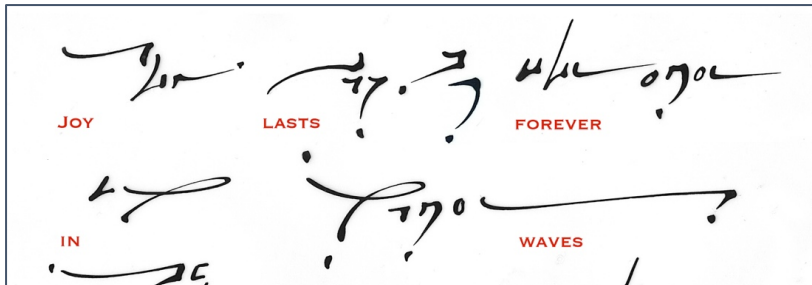


The word "Top" showing possible baselines

Words can be written horizontally, left to right, or vertically, top to bottom:



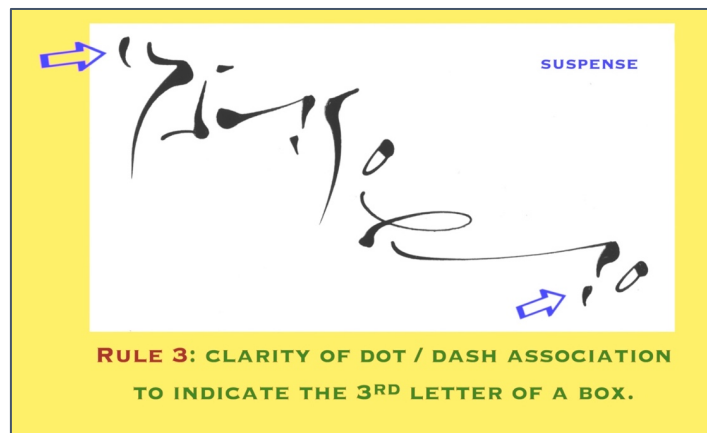
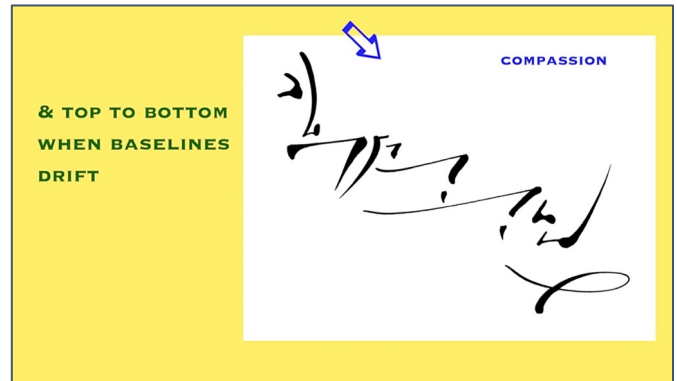
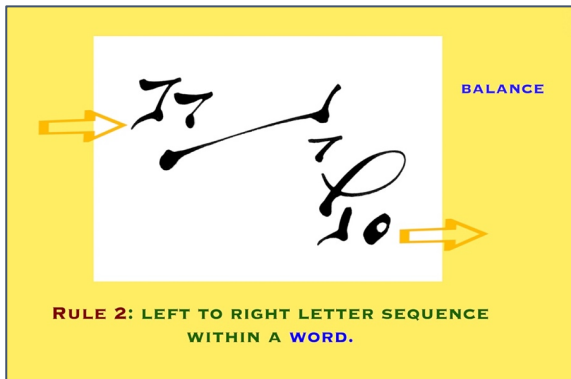
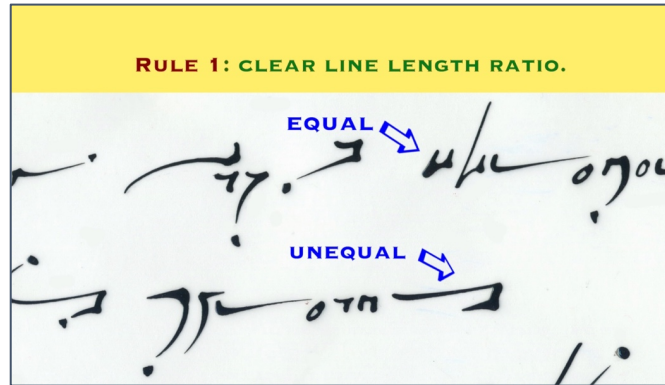
Sentences can be either horizontal or vertical.



"Dots are not circular in shape as in the West, but vary by thickness, and their 'tails' indicate direction of movement in the structure of the character."

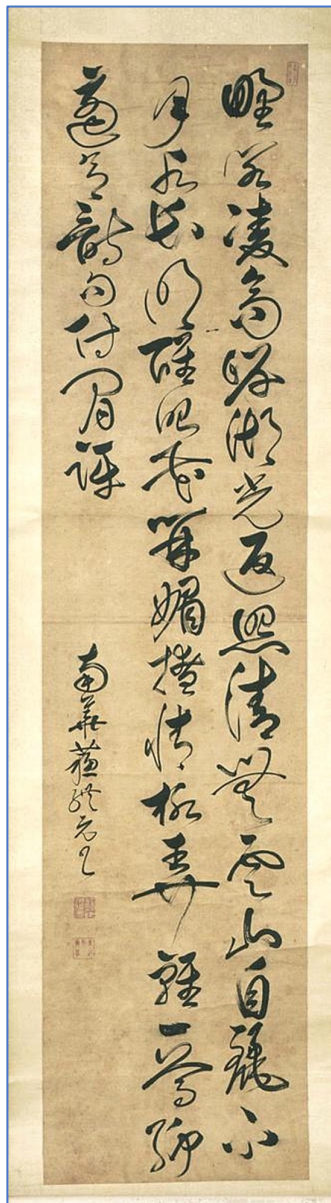
Da-Wei, Kwo, *Chinese Brushwork in Chinese Calligraphy and Painting.*

THE 3 COMPOSITIONAL RULES



FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

The visual character specific to Asian calligraphies, what I call its “line jazz”, comes from their writing system’s graphic elements: pure lines and dots. This is clear in Chinese logograms, which have been adopted and adapted by other Asian cultures.



“In painting and calligraphy, most forms are composed of a combination of dots and lines.”

Da-Wei, Kwo, Chinese Brushwork in Chinese Calligraphy and Painting

Su Ti Yuan - 1600-1700. Cursive script.

Yeh Family Collection
Asian Art Museum; San Francisco.

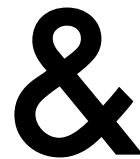
Chinese logograms, and their versions in Japan, don’t represent sounds that can be extracted into parts as it is with Latin letters’ symbols.

Instead, they represent the existence of a thing or an idea by way of a graphic design (a logo, as it were,) made of lines and dot relationships. If you don't know a logogram, you can't read its sound from its lines; someone must tell you what it is intended to represent.

The ampersand (&) in English is an example of a logogram; no part of it has a sound but its form represents its utterance. Because of this, as with logograms, it can be used to represent the word "and" in any language where it is used.



The Mandarin Chinese logogram for "Good" consisting of "Woman" + "Son"



Ampersand – Western logogram for "and" in several languages

The correspondence of logogram to specific subject means you need thousands upon thousands of them. Average literacy in China requires at least 4,000, and thousands more for the upper end of literacy.

And yet this functional disadvantage becomes the means for sublime calligraphy because all logograms are abstract drawings, and like all drawings: made from lines.

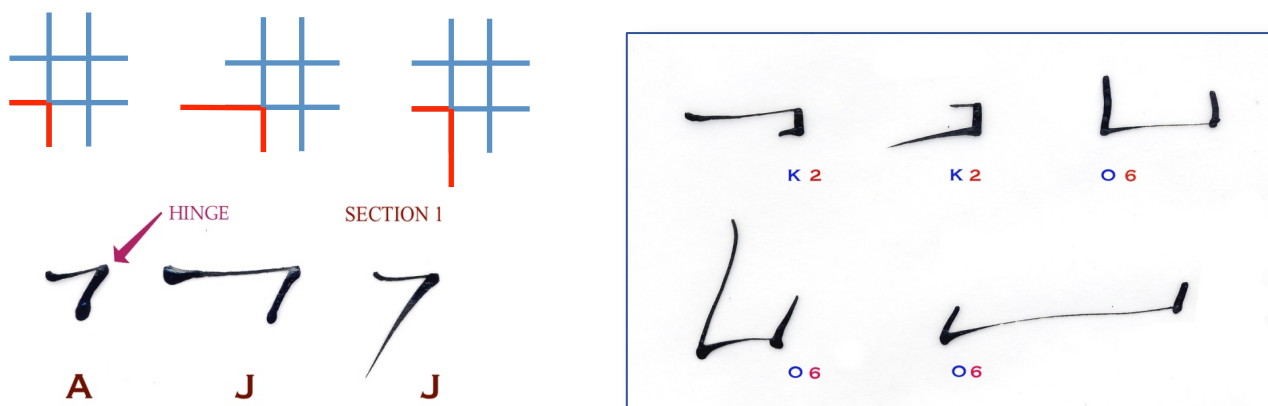
A Westerner who wants to experience the calligraphic nature of such a writing system can learn one of the Asian scripts, or Elian script—the graphic dynamics will be the same.

As few as the 3 compositional principles are, they must be followed for clarity and unambiguity. Only in the advanced form of “Elian cursive” can the rules be bent.

RULE 1: clarity of line ratios: equal or unequal ?

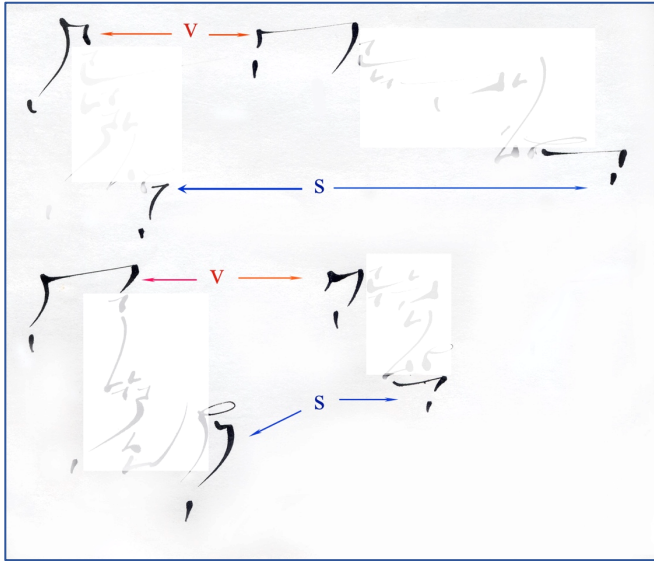
The letters with the fewest options are those of the 1st cycle, as seen with the letter “A” in the figure below—their only variable is the angle of their equal lines—and it must be clear that the intention is for them to be equal.

The 2nd cycle letters have the additional variable of not only which line(s) to lengthen, but how long to lengthen them, and the angle. The intention to have unequal lines is easily represented by making one or two of the lines clearly longer than any other. This is seen in the figure on the left with the letter “J” below:



The figure to the right shows the second letter from section 2, (K), and the second letter from section 6 (O). It illustrates how loose the lines, their lengths, and their angles can be.

With letters of the 3rd cycle, the variable of where to place the dot comes into play along with those of angle and line lengths.



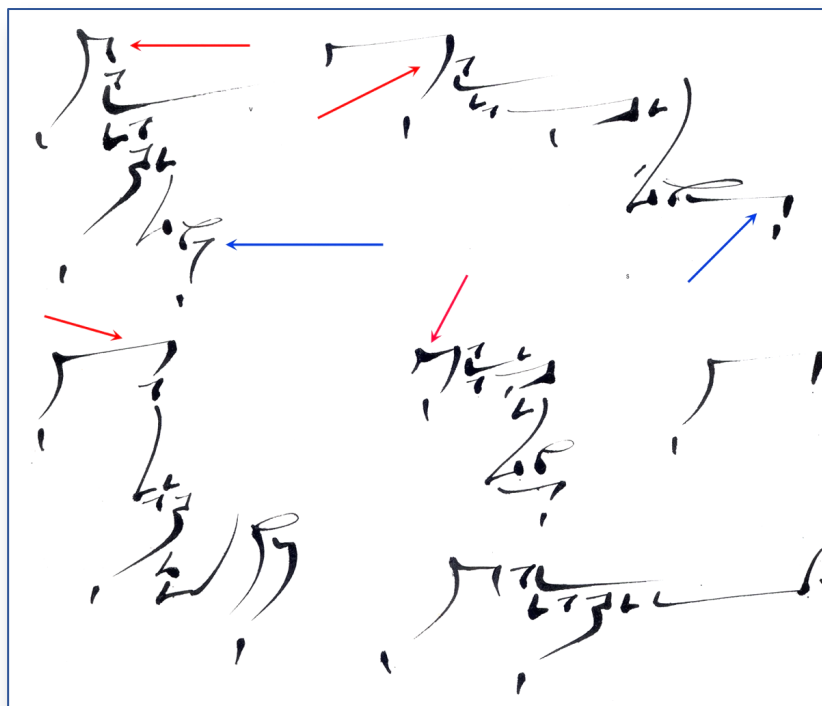
Left: the “V” and “S” in the word “Variations” are highlighted to show some of the forms possible for these letters.

The uncovered version below of the word “**Variations**” shows the other two principles,

RULE 2: writing goes from left to right, and top to bottom if the baselines drift.

RULE 3: it must be clear where the dot is supposed to go. That’s why the dots in the letters “V” (red arrows) and “S” (blue arrows) are where they are.

To place them on one of the other lines would conflict with some of the other letters.



As with Asian calligraphies, the “dot” is not necessarily a round form, but can have great range of shapes.

“In calligraphy it is obvious that the characters are all composed of dots and lines. Dots are not circular in shape, as in the West, but vary by thickness, and their ‘tails’ indicate direction of movement in the structure of the character.” Da-Wei, Kwo, Chinese Brushwork in Chinese Calligraphy and Painting.

Each 3rd cycle letter has an associated dot that differentiates it from the second cycle letter in that same section. Unlike accents or diacritic marks, the placement of that dot is not specified beyond the requirement that it must be clearly associated with its section.



The letter “S” with possible dot locations.

Red + sign is where it *might* be unclear if dot belongs to this set of lines...

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

AVOIDING AMBIGUITY:

Sometimes a word has adjoining letters of both the 2nd and the 3rd cycle, as in the simple word “to”. To be avoided: placing the dot such that it’s not clear which set of lines it belongs, as seen below on the left version:



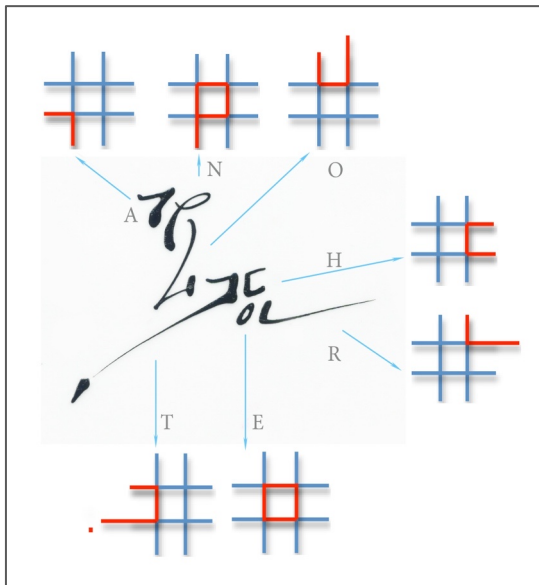
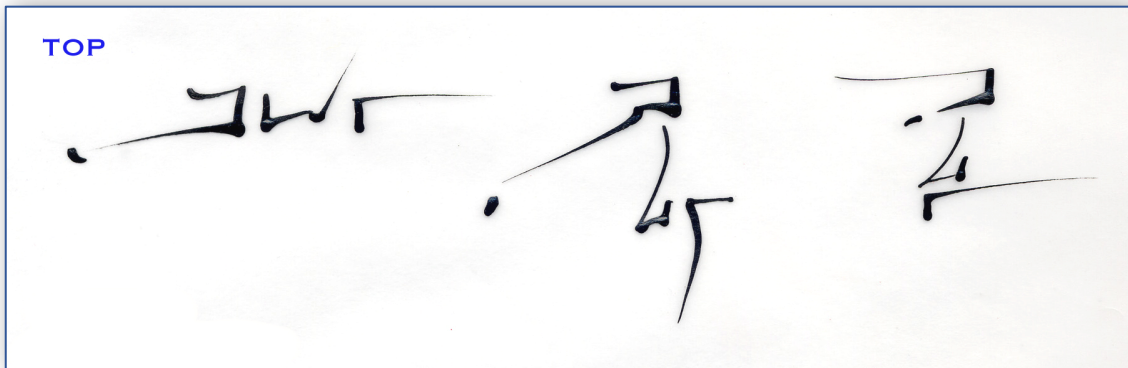
In the illustration of the word “Write”, the dot placement isn’t so crucial because the “R” doesn’t have an associated dot, nor does the “E” after the letter “T”.



There are languages beyond English where a vowel does have an accent. However, and luckily, besides “U” which already has a dot, all the vowels are 1st cycle letters. This makes that the addition of an accent, regardless of shape, should not create ambiguity as to whether it is a 2nd cycle or a 3rd cycle letter.

The system doesn’t specify what number of baselines should be created; the decision is made—almost on the fly—when writing. The number of possible baselines is equal to the number of letters in a given word.

Below is a simple example with the word "top". 3 letters = at least 3 possible baselines. As stated in rule 2: the writing direction goes left to right, and the motion can descend (top to bottom,) with each new letter.



A reminder of the system's structure:

The word "Another" showing letter to grid association.

Following is again the word "variations" indicating different baselines in yellow – a small sample of all the possible compositions. Because of the many choices of structural aspects, it's more difficult to write a word the same way each time as it is to write it differently.

A calligrapher can still choose to cultivate a specific composition, it's just that the system encourages spontaneity over repetition.

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff with yellow lines. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a series of notes and rests. The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff with yellow lines. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a series of notes and rests. The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.














Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff with yellow lines. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a series of notes and rests. The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

VARIATIONS

Three variations of handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff with yellow lines. Each variation starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first variation has a series of notes and rests. The second variation has a series of notes and rests. The third variation has a series of notes and rests.

Three variations of handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff with yellow lines. Each variation starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first variation has a series of notes and rests. The second variation has a series of notes and rests. The third variation has a series of notes and rests.

If one were to exercise all the options for a given word, it could well take months. Here for example is the 13-letter word "compositional". Leaving aside specific line lengths as a variable, the math adds up to 1,617,408 possible compositions.

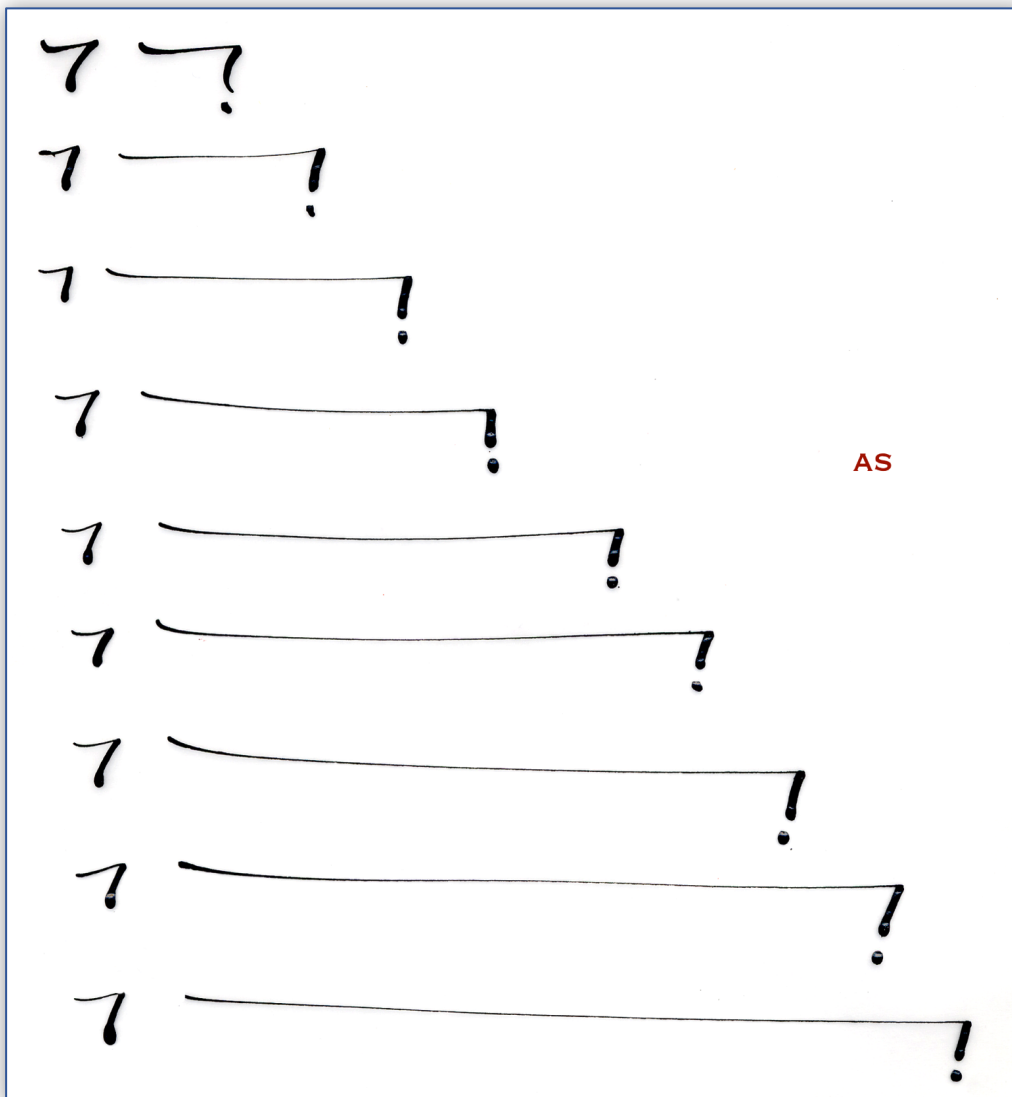
	C = ANGLES ARE VARIABLE BUT COULD BE CONSIDERED STYLISTIC CHOICES SO I WON'T ASSIGN A NUMBER OF VARIABLES TO FIRST CYCLE LETTERS.
	O = 3 POSSIBLE SIDES LENGTHENED
	M = 3 POSSIBLE SIDES LENGTHENED
	P = 2 POSSIBLE SIDES LENGTHENED
	O = 3 POSSIBLE SIDES LENGTHENED
	S = 2 POSSIBLE SIDES LENGTHENED MARK FOR "S" = 4- "4" IS FOR BASIC CARDINAL DIRECTIONS.
	I - SAME AS FOR "C"
	T = 3 POSSIBLE SIDES LENGTHENED MARK = 4
	I - SAME AS FOR "C"
	O = 3 POSSIBLE SIDES LENGTHENED
	N = 4 (SAME REASONING AS FOR THE MARK)
	A = SAME AS "C" AND "I"
	L = 2 POSSIBLE SIDES LENGTHENED

VARIATIONS POSSIBLE
 $3 \times 3 \times 2 \times 3 \times 2 \times 4 \times 3 \times 4 \times 3 \times 4 \times 2 \times 13$
 (# OF LETTERS & BASELINES) = 1,617,408

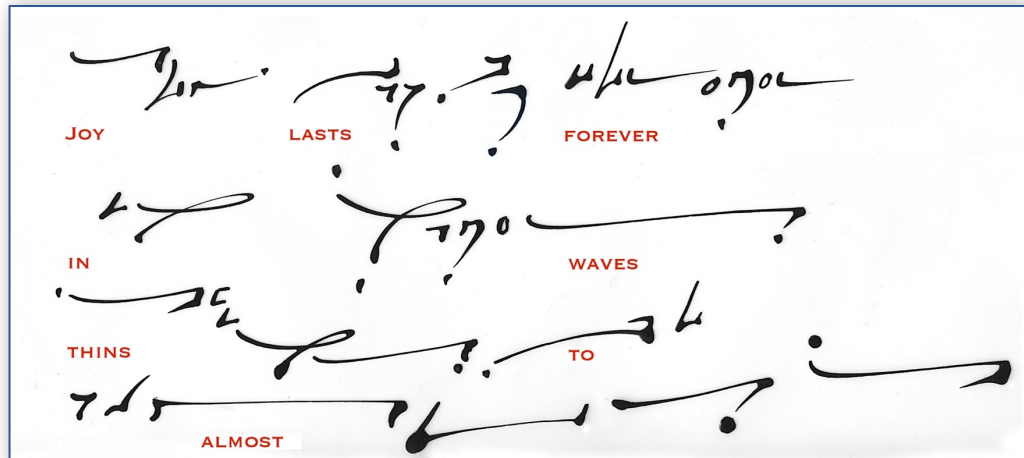
How to make any of these compositions aesthetic is in the lines of the calligrapher and their exercise of the various choices. However, the underlying beauty of this system is that the variations are consistent with the system and not a modification of it.

As such, Elian script offers far more freedom than do Latin letters or logograms. With the former, varying proportions of letters or multiple baselines are considered to reflect dysfunction, and with the latter, lengthening lines and placing them in different relationships leads to either nonsense or a completely other meaning.

Below, the word "as" is an example of the wide freedom in line lengths; if the writer / calligrapher can sustain it, the lines can be as long as they wish.



The system allows for words to be different in size. Below an extract of the poem "Joy" by Patrick M. Hayden. You'll note that the last word "almost" takes up the entire line.



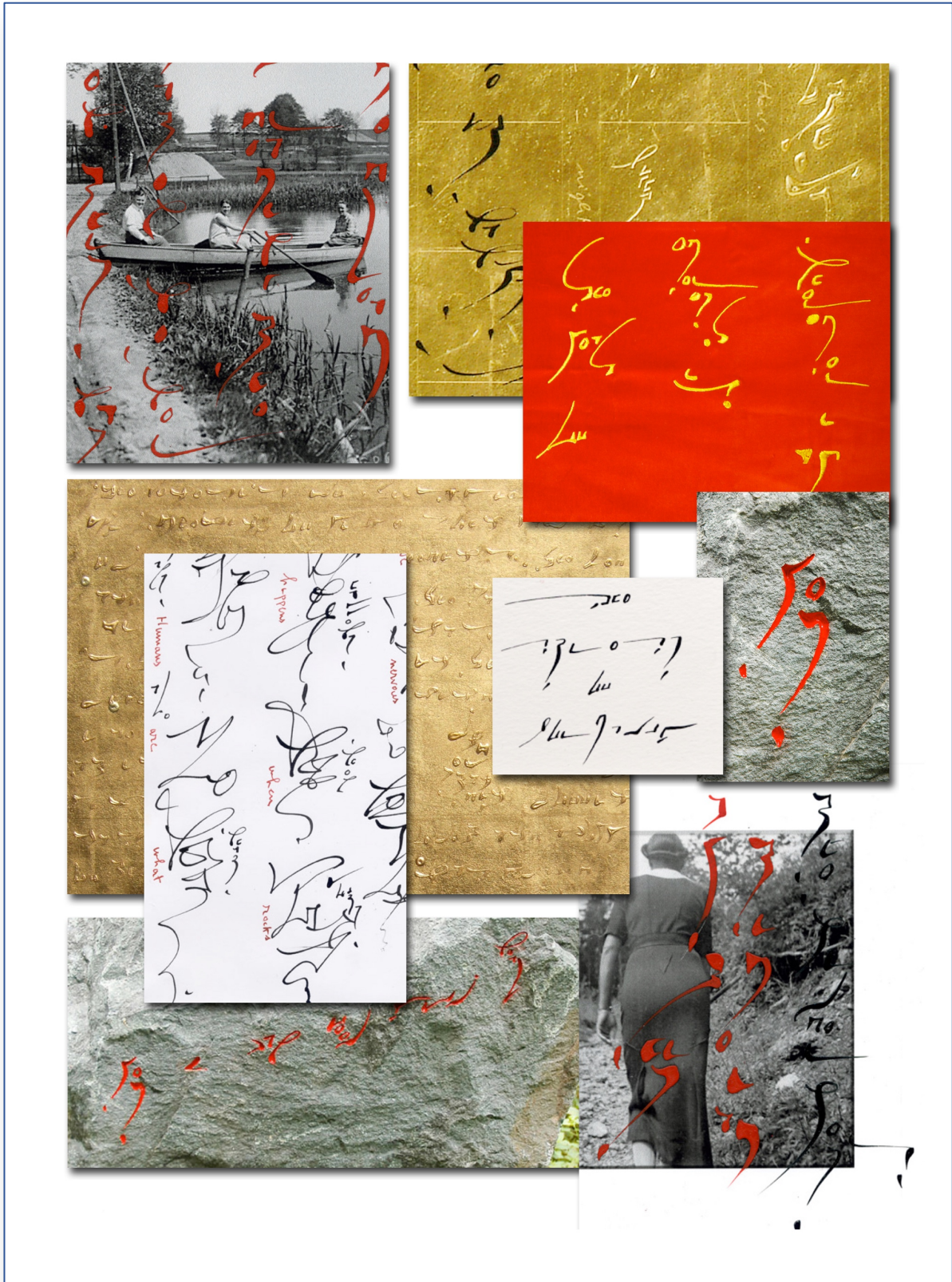
This expansion can't be helped because there are minimal guardrails to conform to and, once the writing begins, it tends to take on a life of its own. Therefore, how one is feeling in *that moment* has the space to express itself without concern about breaking any rules.

"A finished piece of fine calligraphy is not a symmetrical arrangement of conventional shapes but, rather, something like the coordinated movements of a skillfully composed dance—impulse, momentum, momentary poise, and the interplay of active forces combining to form a balanced whole." Chiang Yee, Professor Columbia University—Encyclopedia Britannica—"Chinese Calligraphy"

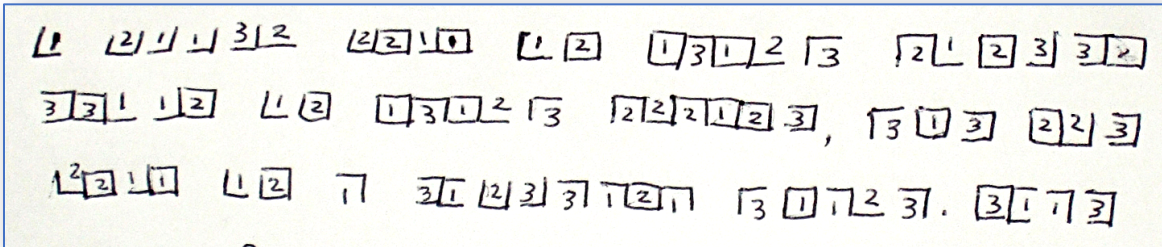
Meanwhile, Asian calligraphy's philosophy offers us viewpoints onto the calligraphic line whereby we benefit from the experience of 2,000 years of calligraphers. The bend of reeds in the wind, the form of a branch reaching outwards, the curve of waves, the flight of birds, these are all inspirations that guide the visual soul of a line.

Although I developed Elian script for my own purposes to study words, it's also intended to be used by others. This system derives its forms so much from the expressive potential of lines, that each writer can make it their own, and do so in ways that surpass what I am likely to do.

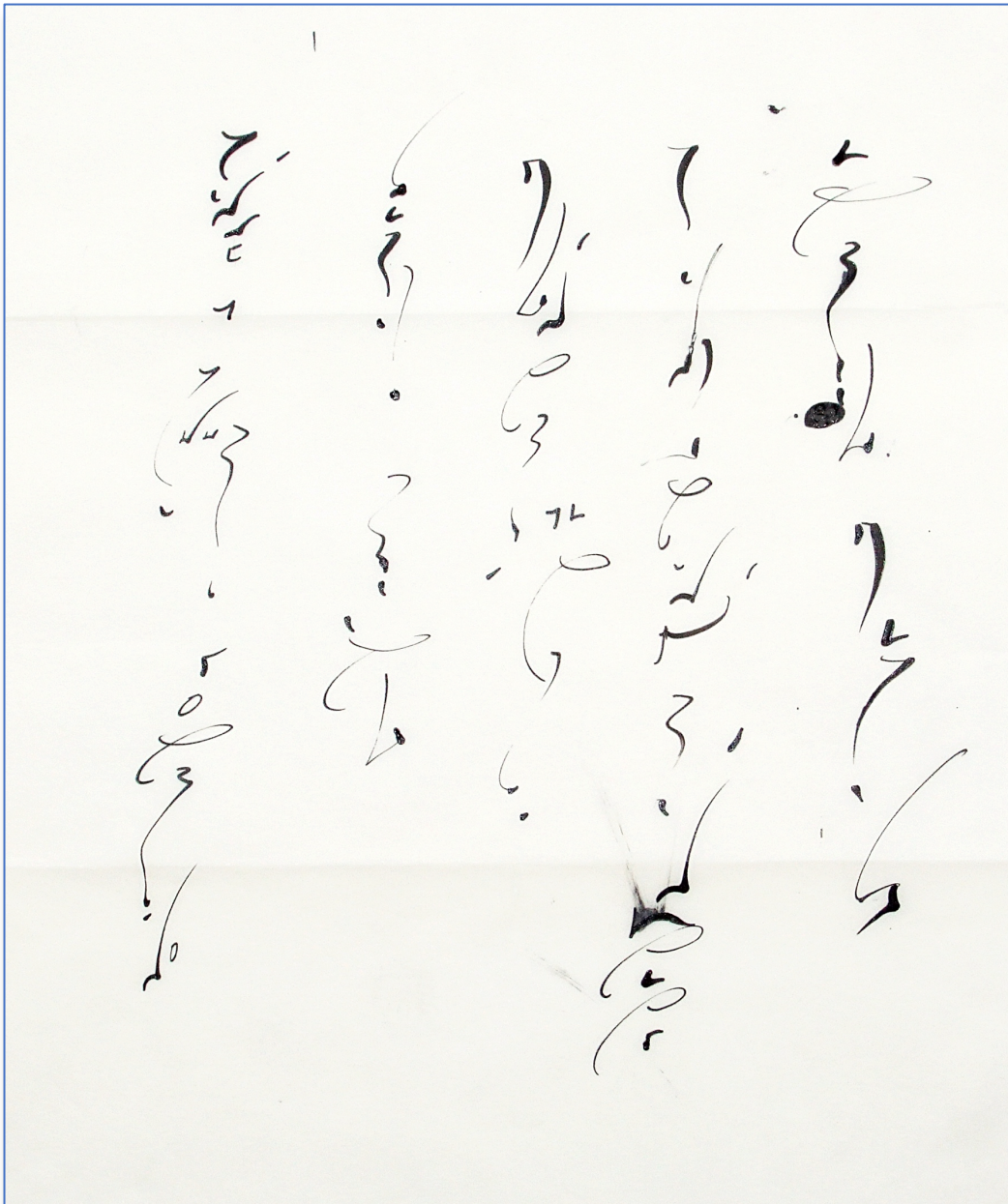
EVOLUTION OF ELIAN SCRIPT

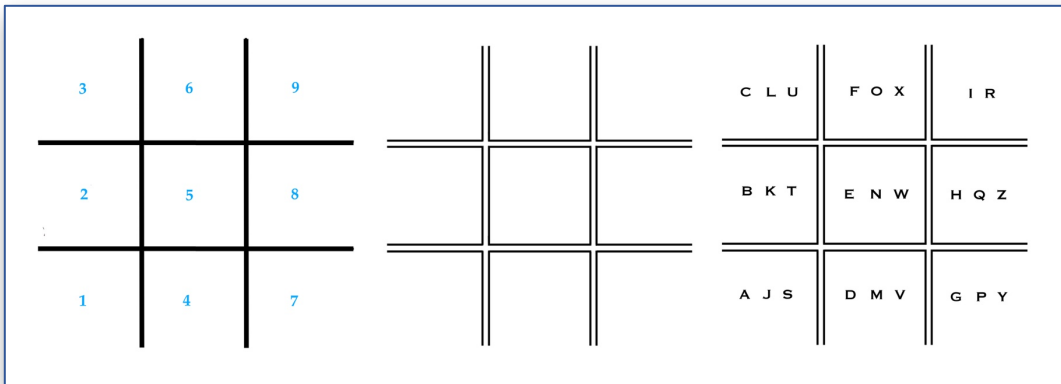


From this....



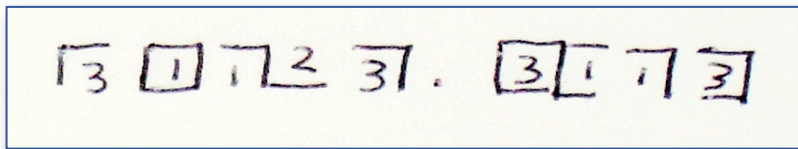
To this....





Elian script started out as a simple code that was based, literally, upon the structures of the 9-square grid, as explained earlier in this PDF.

I simply took the shape of the sections and added either a 1, 2, or 3, to indicate which letter appeared in a specific section.



The words "years" and "what" in the earliest version of the code

Elian script was originally intended to differentiate, at a glance, unfinished notebook writings from those still in progress. Before developing it, I used the letters of the Cyrillic alphabet as sheer phonetic elements for English sounds: "Tuscany" would thus be written "ТСКАНИ".

However, the more I wrote phonetically in Cyrillic, the more my spelling in English deteriorated. Translated back from Russian letters to English letters, ТСКАНИ — would become "Tskani;" I needed something else.

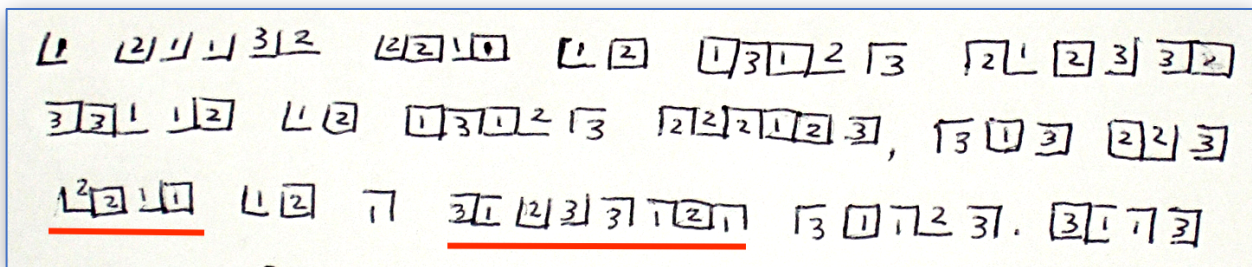
Soon after, I came across the numbered nine-square grid (previous page) and saw that each of the nine box-sections had a unique configuration. By placing the alphabet in sequence into each of the 9 sections, only three letters appeared within each one. That and the addition of a "1", "2", or "3", created that each section could stand for all of the 26 letters of the Latin alphabet.

At first I used this grid simply as a code with no calligraphic aspects. Only when modification led to modification did the potential for calligraphy emerge.

Each modification maintained the system all the while stretching its limits, and always for the sake of speed and flow of movement from one letter to another—historically common dynamics in the transformation of many writing systems

The entire process of change was nearly imperceptible because each modification was needed to make the next alteration possible. Only in hindsight was I struck by the contrast between the beginning and the final appearances of this writing system.

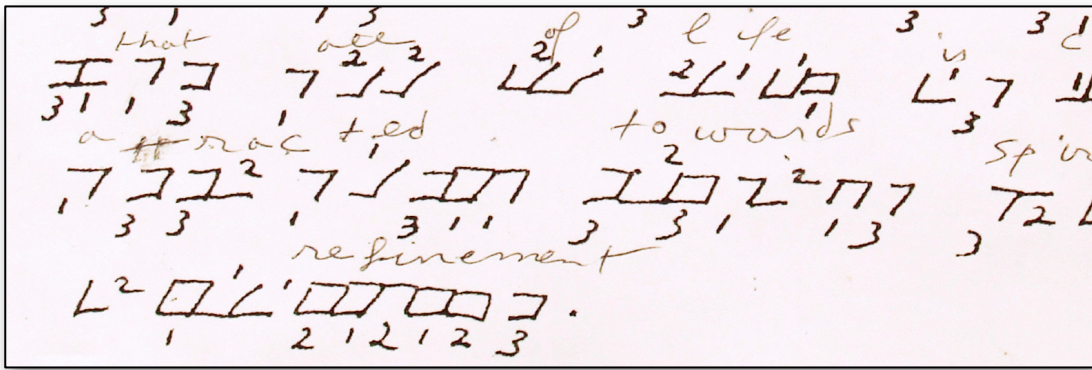
Periodically, I edited notes into new notebooks and threw out the old ones. As a result very few examples remain of the original writings at each stage of development. Luckily, enough survive to demonstrate the various stages.



Above - 1. Earliest version - Ca. 1980 - Numbers are placed in boxes.

(Underlines indicate the use of common walls for words "once" and "thousand".

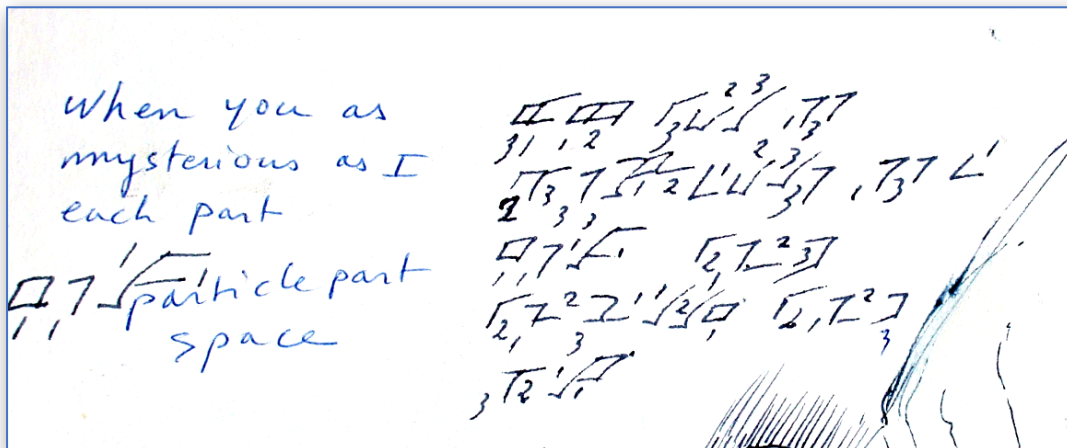
"I occur once in every minute, twice in every moment, yet not once in a thousand years. What....")



Above: 2. Numerals start to migrate outside the sections. Ca. 1982
 There is still the square-like form and common walls are still used

Within a short time the sides of the boxes became slanted, probably because there is naturally a rightward slant to my writing in the Latin version. By taking the path of least resistance the pace of writing increased .

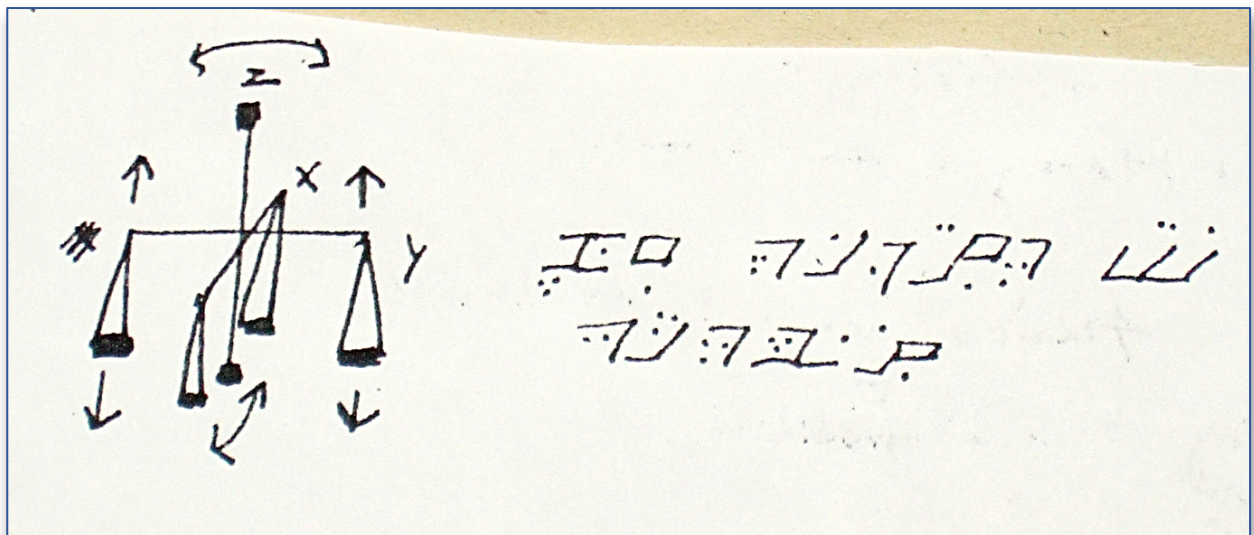
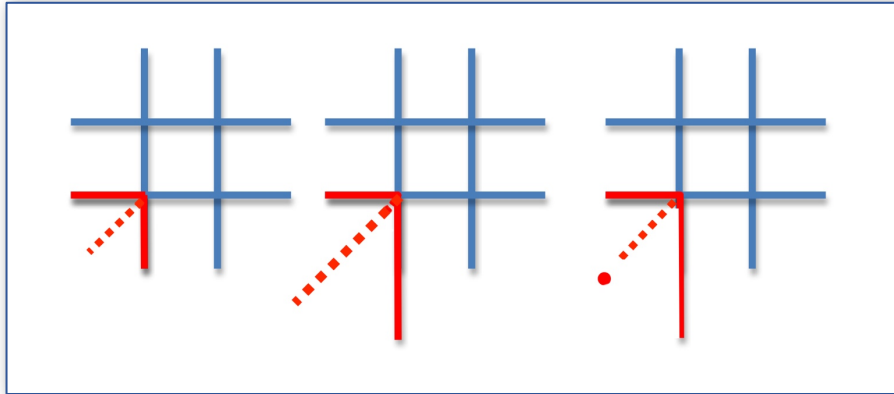
The numerals are now placed well outside of their respective boxes without losing their association to them. The writing was made much easier without the need to fit numerals into boxes and doing so didn 't make any difference to the clarity of the system. This last condition dictated whether or not any modification would stay.



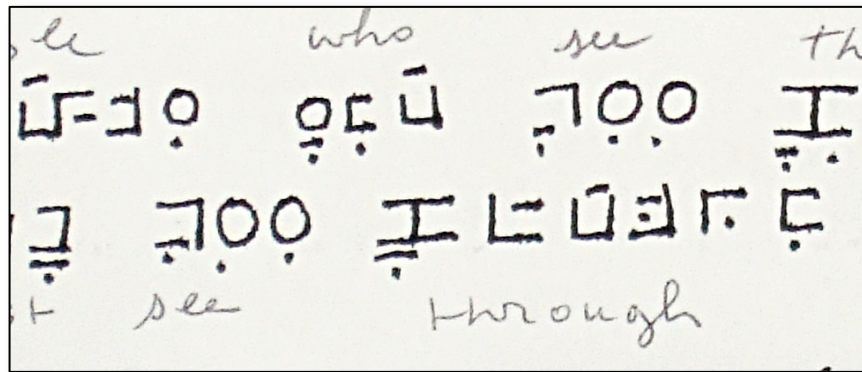
Above - 3. Lines lengthen for increased speed of writing. Ca. 1983

Now that I felt the greater flow of the slanted lines, they naturally lengthened. The numerals plus the connecting points of the lines do the work of section-letter specificity. This makes it insignificant whether or not the lines are at right angles.

When snapped to the grid all slanted lines amount to the same information: the location of the point(s) where the lines meet and how many meeting points to a given section.



Above - 4. Numerals are replaced by an equal number of dots - Late 1983
Given that the highest numeral needed was a 3, it was a lot faster to replace numerals with an equal number of dots.

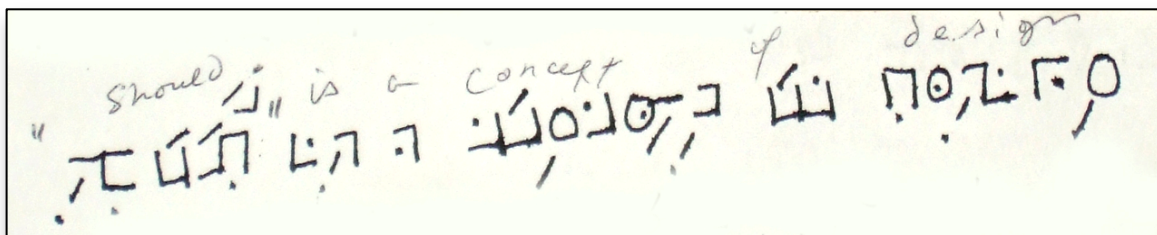


Above - 5. Two dots for the 2nd cycle are combined into a dash.

Inspired by the tendency for two ink dots to merge, I realized rather quickly that I could blend the two dots into a dash. This was a net gain in speed and ease of writing. The 1st cycle letter was now represented by a dot, the 2nd by a dash, and the 3rd by a dot plus a dash.

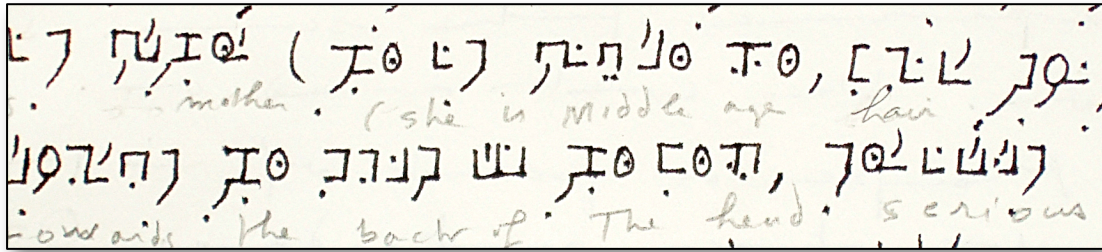
In addition, The square form of the center section 5 (E, N, W,) now becomes a circle. This works because the vital characteristic of that section is complete enclosure, and a circle is much faster to form than is a square.

As evident in the above illustration, I reverted briefly to equal length lines and right angles as a hedge against confusion while in the early stages of using the new element of dashes.



Above - 6. Dashes become slanted Ca. 1984

As it was earlier with the lines for the sides of a given box, the dashes for the letters of the second and third cycles began to slant. This made the writing process far more fluid.

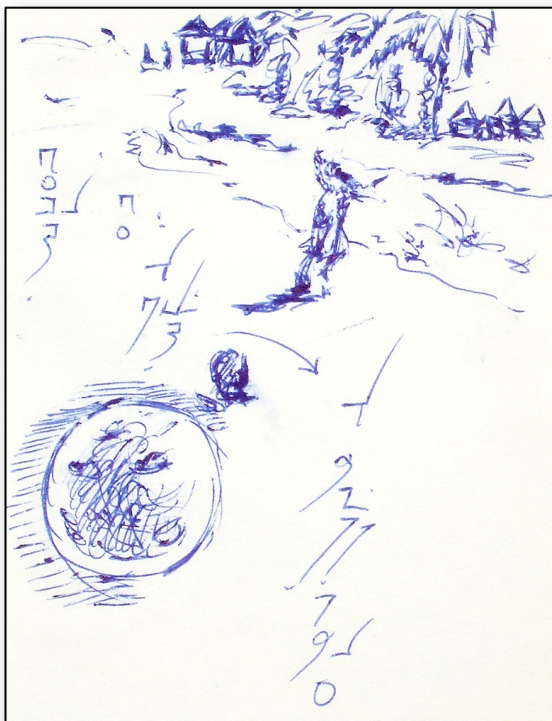


Above -7. Dashes connect to boxes for 2nd cycle -

Two dots here now mean the doubling of a letter instead of a 2nd cycle letter. Note the double "d" of the word "middle" in the top line. This abbreviation was soon discarded. 1985

The additional action of lifting the pen to make the dash is now circumvented by lengthening any one of the lines that made up a given section and its 2nd cycle, e.g. attaching the dash to the box.

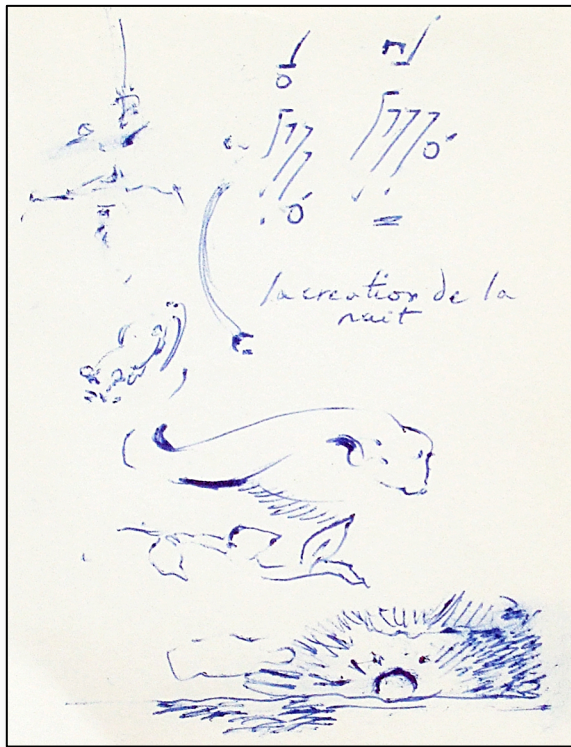
Because the dash was now used 2nd cycle letters, the double dots could be used for something else. As indicated in the caption, I used these double dots to indicate the doubling of a letter. Before long this element seemed too arbitrary, so off it went.



Left - 8. Letter composition starts to stack. Lengthened line used for 2nd cycle and dot added to it for 3rd cycle (arrows.)

Writing is in French: ". "le début de la mort > la naissance,"

"the beginning of death > birth". Ca. 1986



Left - 9.

Stacking of letters due to limited writing space.

Accents can be added to 1st cycle letters because equal lines now replace the single dot that used to indicate them.

Writing in French: "*le passé du passé – la création de la nuit*" – "the past's past – the ceation of night". Ca. 1986

With the use of equal line lengths for the 1st cycle section, the dot disappears. In the above example the "a" in both instances of the French word "passé" are not equal in length because these notes were rapidly made during a live storytelling performance on a small notebook .

At this stage of the code (and I still thought of it as one,) I was not as concerned as I would be later that it be a tight system; all writings were still for my private notes.

The size of the above notebooks (3.35"x 2") left me with little space for both text and drawings so I found myself spontaneously stacking letters, without loss of legibility. I would naturally move my eye from left to write and then top to bottom. The letter sequence remains preserved.

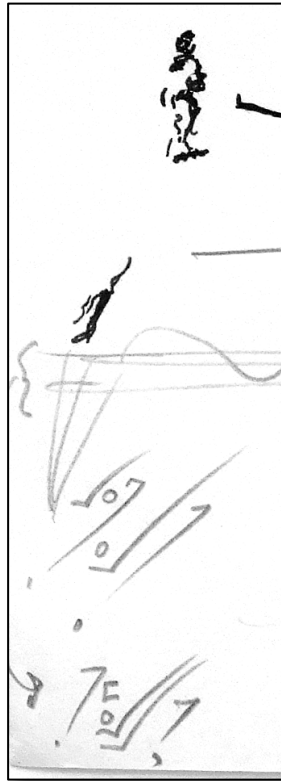


Left - 10. Common walls no longer used and each letter is separate from any other. Ca 1987

When necessary I would stack the letters of a word to fit them into the space available however, I still thought that writing along the same baseline was the way it *should* be.

That said, the stacking of letters had loosened each letter from its linear bond and I now started to see each letter as an individual element in need of its own distinction.

By 1987 I began to detach the lines of a given section from those of the neighboring one and discarded common walls.



Left - 11. Letter sequence stacks more readily with discard of common walls.
Ca.1987-1988

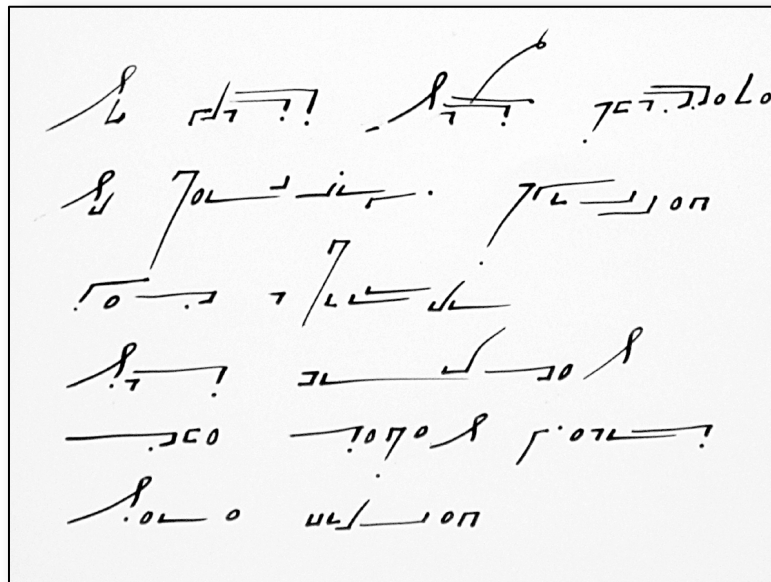
After 1987 I began to stack letters even with room to move across the page. And here is where I let go of the Latin alphabet's mandatory straight baseline. In doing so I discovered a new freedom available within the script. The more I stacked the letters of words, the more I saw that several baselines meant a word could be composed in different ways, all without loss of legibility.

By now I really had to make lines lengths equal if I wanted to indicate letters of the 1st cycle, otherwise I would be confused between that cycle and the 2nd. The additional focus required caused the loosened restraint for letters of the 2nd cycle to feel all the more vivid.

The introduction of variable baselines was not only a compositional shift but also a conceptual one—I noticed a distinct paradigm shift with the emergence of descending baselines. Each letter tumbled loose and took on an individual presence such that a word revealed itself as an assembly of parts and no longer a solid unit.

The greater use of letter stacking inspired explorations of the compositional possibilities and created two self-sustaining options: to write all in a straight line (as below) or to stack, which could also include letters that traveled along the same baseline.

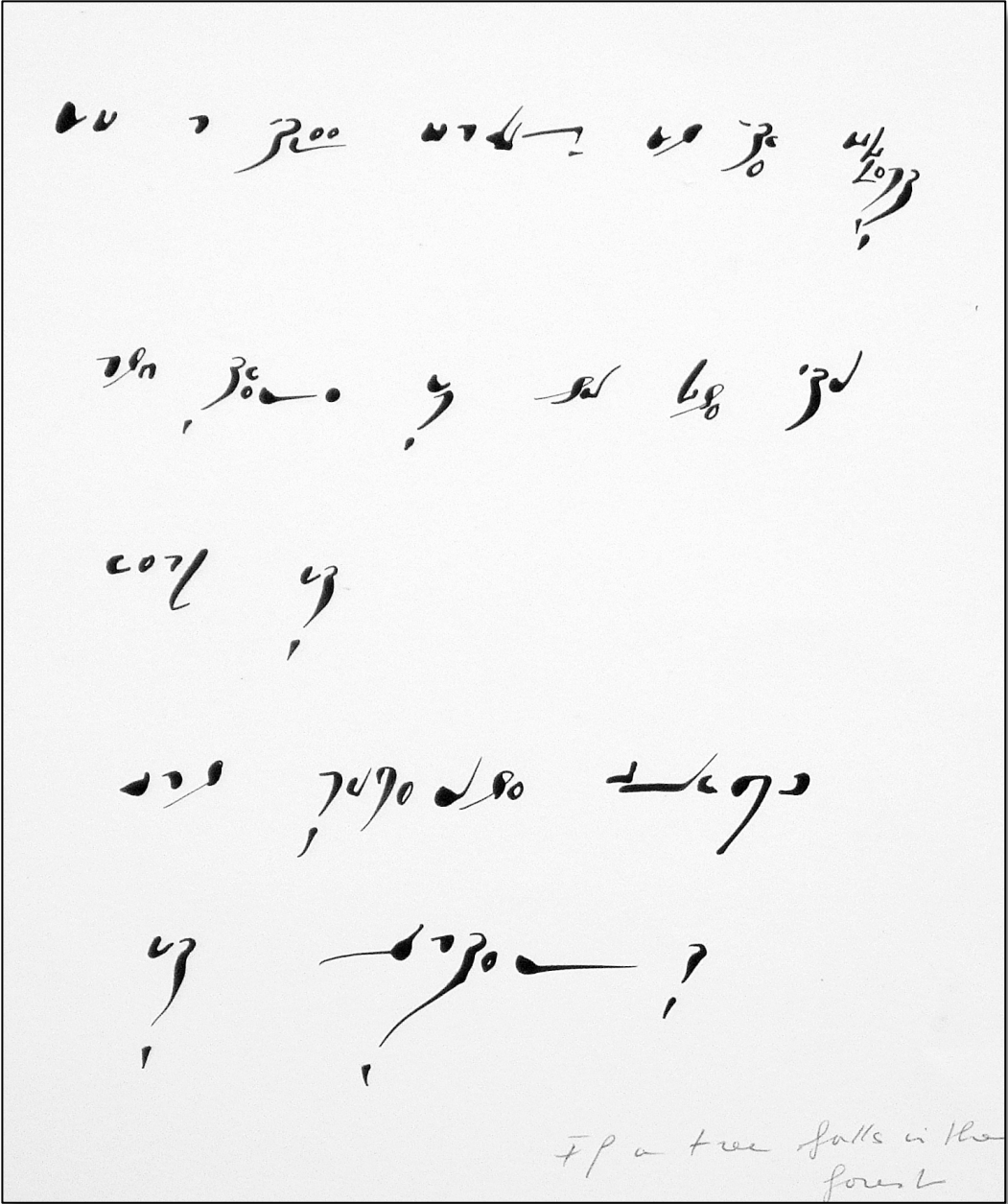
This consideration was somewhat casual because I still seeing this writing system as a private means of recording language. That there might be interesting compositional and visual aspects to it were still peripheral observations.



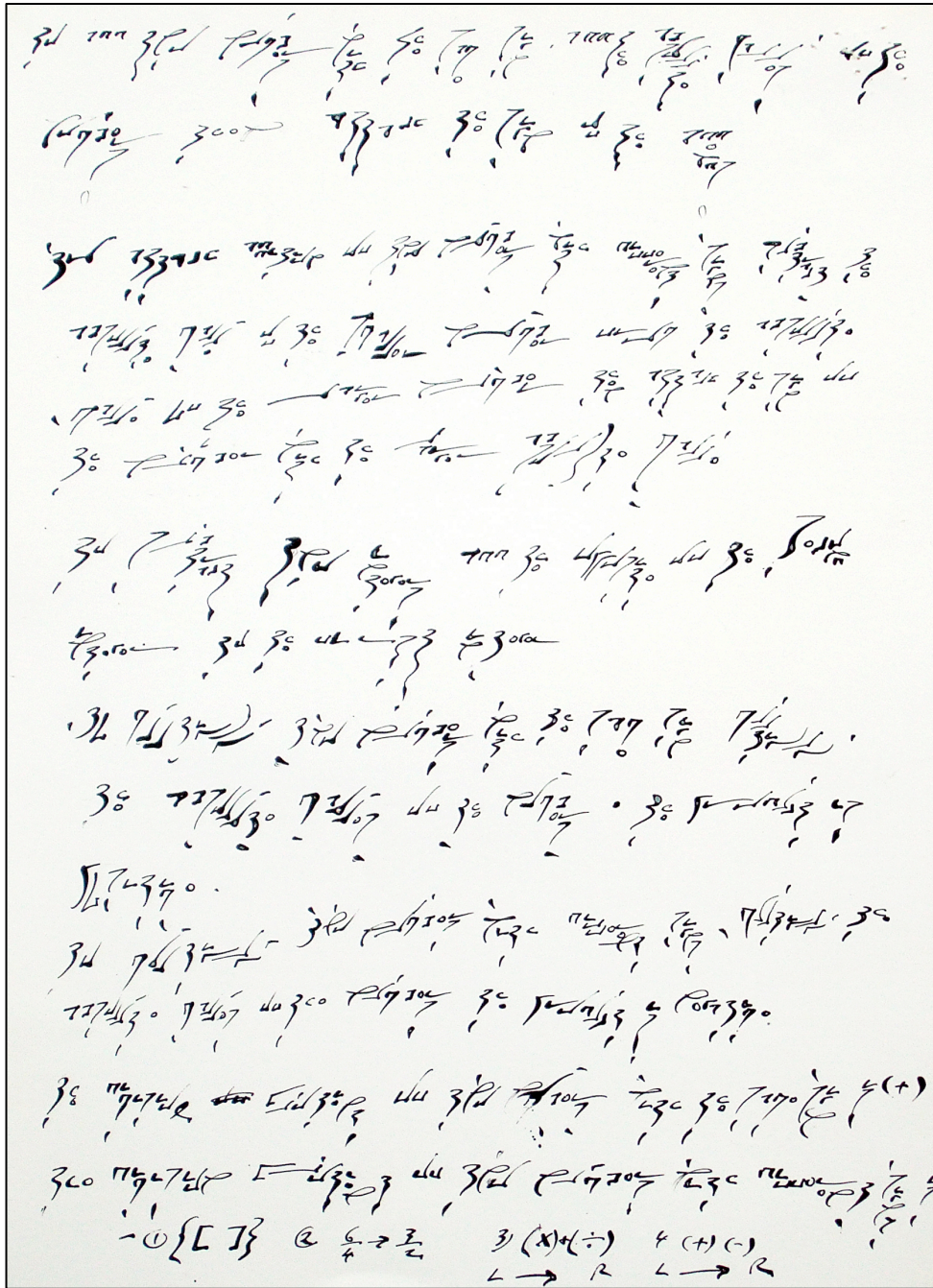
Above - 12. Calligraphic aspect emerges. Drifting baselines naturally occur with separated letters.

The three basic rules of this system were now firmly established : unambiguous line ratios, writing direction : left to right then top to bottom , and clarity of dot association with its associated section coordinates.

It was at this point that other aspects of the system came out that, until then, I was too involved in consolidating the system itself to notice. The above example is among the first where I played with the sweep of the lines' lengths.

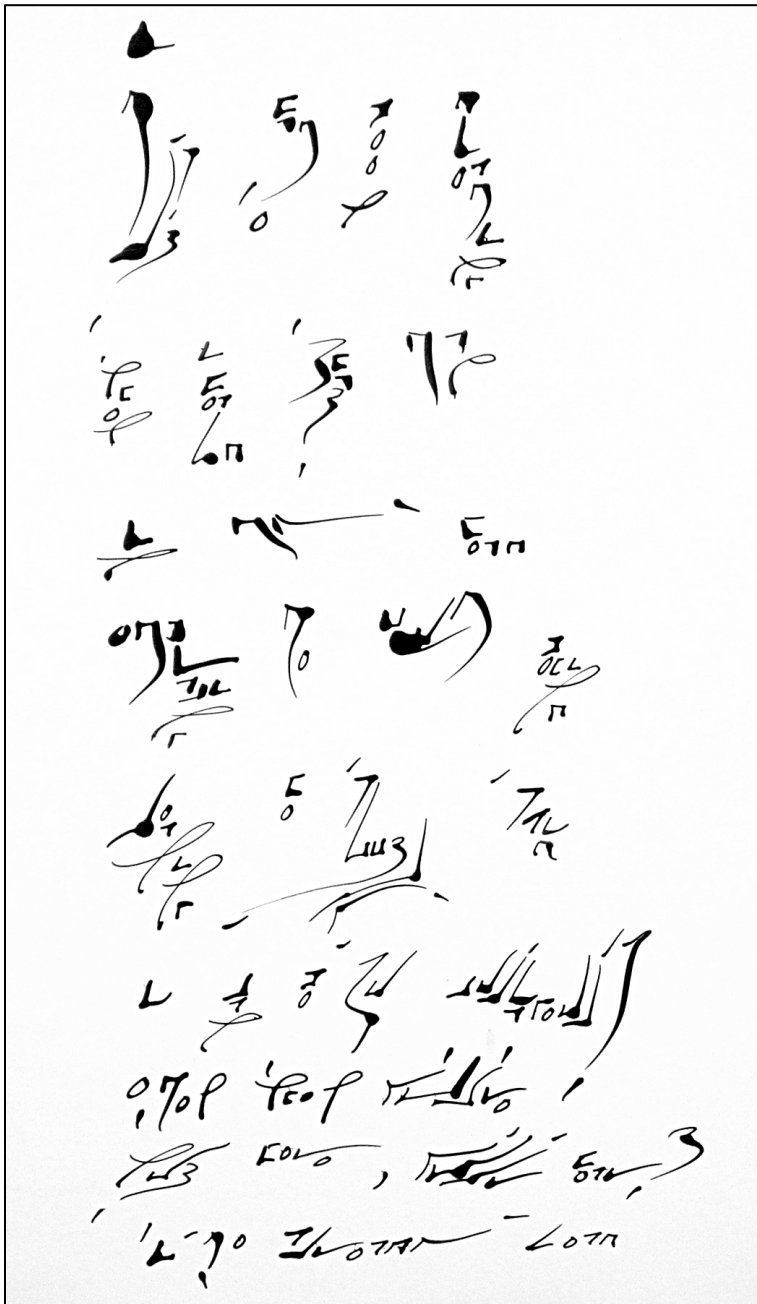


"If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one to hear it
can someone climb it later ?



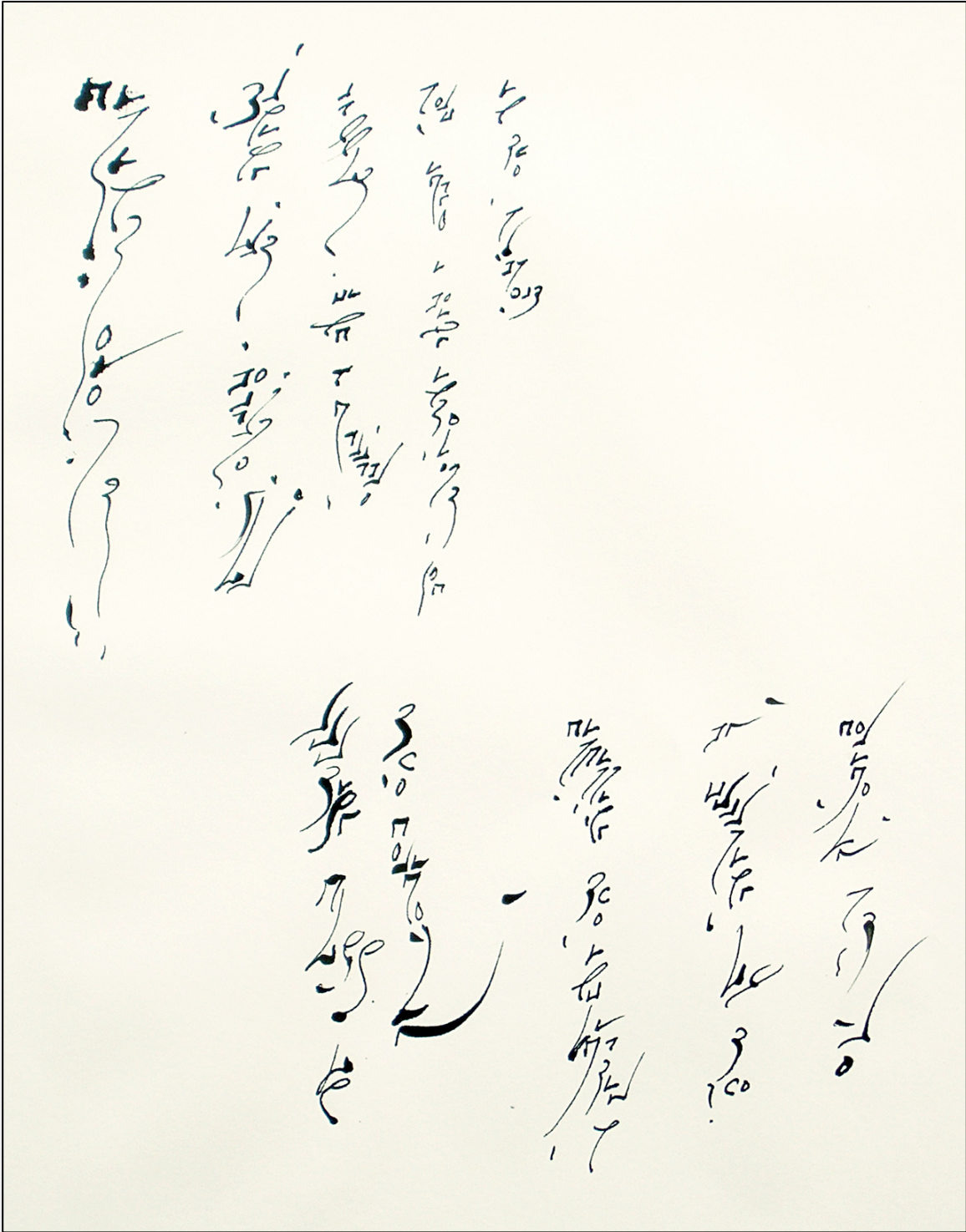
By the time of the above text, I was completely liberated from the gravitational pull of a writing system that travels only along a single baseline.

The illustration is a text version of basic algebraic formulae. Its standard form is written in numerals and mathematical symbols.

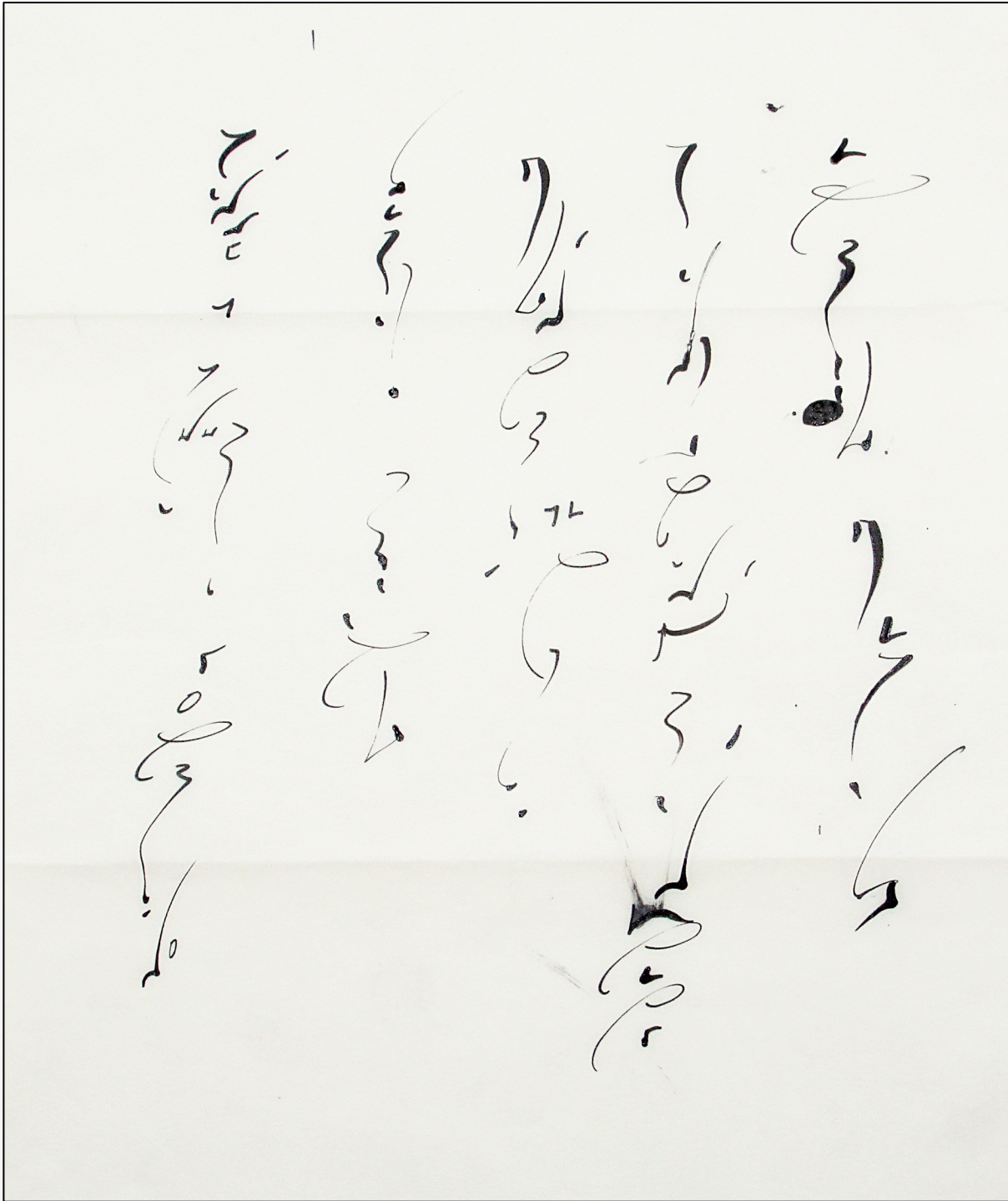


With time, I just let go more and more into the freedom offered by the system. Not to be a calligrapher, which has never been my goal, but because it felt good to move more freely all the while writing actual text.

That said, due to the inherent calligraphic nature of the script my work has regularly appeared in calligraphy magazines.



Above is writing done in vertical columns that go from left to right.



Above: the writing goes into the realm that in China is called "cursive", bordering on "grass script", so called because grass in the wind is both "orderly and disorderly".

The test of this system's reliability is whether or not writings from many years ago are legible upon their re-reading. When doing so, I don't know at first sight what word a composition represents since the compositions of the words are variable. Instead, I must look at a word and realize each time anew what letters are indicated.

Upon reviewing older notebooks I had the novel experience of first noticing the beginning of the word, that is: which letter or two was represented. And then my gaze would go to the end of the word where I would also notice the last one or two letters and decipher them. In virtually all instances the middle letters wouldn't need to be read because the whole word would appear as suddenly as popcorn released from its kernel.

Up to this point I have focused on the outer aspects of Elian script. However, there's an inner perceptual effect that comes from writing with it.

"A nation's cultural psyche and thinking pattern can be found deeply rooted in the configuration of its writing system."

Robert St. Clair- -Professor of Communication, University of Louisville

This is covered in the following section.

GOING INTO THE DEPTHS OF ELIAN SCRIPT

Few of us realize that either the left or the right brain hemisphere is engaged and strengthened by the way that we *must* form the elements of our native writing system. And so is that hemisphere's natural way of prioritizing and organizing information.

"...linear orthographical systems of writing are processed with the left hemisphere of the brain. They are processed logically. Pictorial writing systems, on the other hand, are processed with the right hemisphere of the brain and use visual thinking. Those who [are] embodied within visual cultures live in a different world from those who are encased in linear orthographical cultures." Robert St. Clair.

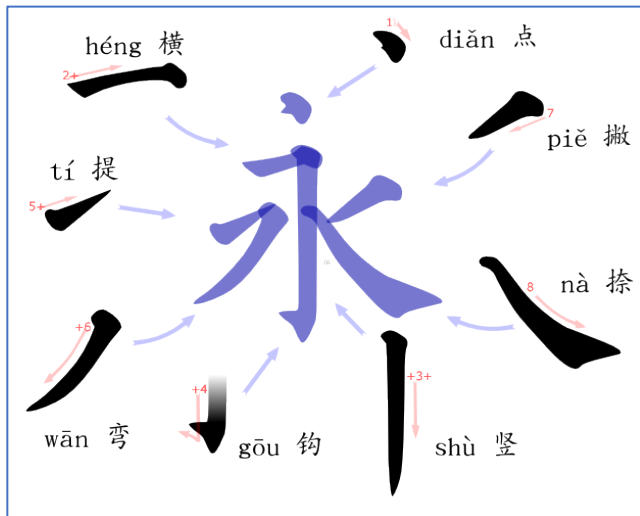


We take it for granted that if we use the Latin alphabet, writing left to right and using a small set of symbols, is the normal way. Just as those who use logograms think that composing abstract drawings with lines is the way writing should be. By functioning within each framework of literacy, we contribute and shape a society that reflects the dynamics of the brain hemisphere that is thus strengthened.

In the alphabetical countries we value individuals and their rights... at least in intent.



The small number of symbols needed to represent the entire language means that there is a far smaller investment required for literacy in alphabetized cultures than in logographic ones. This fact has significant implications for how each kind of culture develops, both technologically and politically.



The strokes for the word "fortune".

The names next to the lines are not for the sound of the word, but the those of individual lines—also used for other logograms.

If you are unfamiliar with this logogram, someone will have to tell you how it sounds and what it represents.

A symbol-based system such as the Latin alphabet engages the left hemisphere and strengthens its functionality, which is sensitive to the role of individual units, logical sequences, and proportions. Each of the 26 individual letter has its role to play in a word and each is distinct from the other. This individualism is well reflected in Western society.

"The breaking up of every kind of experience into uniform units in order to produce faster action and change of form, applied knowledge, has been the secret of Western power over man and nature alike." Marshall McLuhan.

Conversely, logograms with individual lines that only function when they are part of a composition strengthens the right hemisphere's sense of holistic group dynamics. This is seen in how Asian societies have far more conformity among the people and group cohesion than do Western ones—accepting the one-child policy in China is an example.

I wrote about this in *Write Makes Right: Writing Systems & Cultural Worldviews*, which doesn't mention Elian script since the subject stands on its own. However, Elian script in fact does engage both hemispheres of the brain because we're simultaneously writing letters, (left hemisphere), and drawing by making compositional choices of lines and dashes (right hemisphere). As a result, we're developing our whole brain, a strength that can only have advantages of perception and insight.

Each writing system reflects the culture that uses it, and Elian script is no exception; it too has a culture, one that fosters freedom of movement, self-expression, and respect for the group, simultaneously with empowerment of the individual.

"The quality of a calligraphy comes from the quality of the lines and the compositions that they form. By following their character, the character of the calligrapher is inferred. It is graphology in the pure sense of the word."

From my notes at the Symposium on Chinese Calligraphy, Seattle Art Museum, April 2001

CONSTRICTIONS / FREEDOMS IN DIFFERENT WRITING SYSTEMS. The expressed force of a line or shape cannot help but reiterate the energy, skill, and overall tone of its maker. A weak writer cannot make a strong line. The sparser the letter form, the more responsive the writing instrument, the more naked the writer's state.

Writing systems are like musical instruments and, similarly, the tonalities that can emerge depend in great part upon their structures and the materials needed to shape them. The fact remains that certain motions in space are more accessible while writing in one system versus another.

Contained in the mix is the fact that different cultures stress to varying degrees the value of function over that of art, with functionality first in line.

Even China, whose logographic writing system is by default, called “Chinese calligraphy” became aware of the functional limitations that this system imposes. And so, to overcome the obstacles of keyboards and global business, it created Pinyin (sound writing) which is a system of 23 Latin letters with accents that can represent the sounds attached to logograms.

A calligrapher using the phonetic Pinyin form of Chinese, works within the same options and constraints as a calligrapher working in English.

“Horse” in Pinyin: *Mǎ* *Mǎ* *Mǎ* *mǎ* *Mǎ*

Aside from Elian script, however, there hasn’t been a mainstream need to create an aesthetic Western writing system whose calligraphic range parallels that of Asian calligraphies.

“Writing in Chinese doesn’t have to be qualified as calligraphy, because writing is the art. There is no Western counterpart with Latin letters. In China, calligraphy is above painting as the highest art form. “Last speaker at Symposium on Chinese Calligraphy. Seattle Asian Art Museum, Seattle, April 21, 2001.

Most Western cultures, (European and American), tend to strongly emphasize functionality in writing, with the art of writing reserved for special occasions. In the meantime, the writer must pass through many filters before they’re considered literate.

For example, alphabetical systems have spelling as one filter of operational functionality. There is no excellence in style that can overcome the dissonance of

unconventional spelling, even though “correct” spelling is itself based on majority convention. Staying along a single baseline is another determinant of valid expression, as is legibility, or maintaining equal proportions between letters and words.

Speling is helpfful

Several ways of not conforming to the rules for literacy with Latin letters in English.

Spelling is helpful

It usually results in scepticism about the writer’s functionality.

spe lling is h elpful

With logographic systems such as Chinese or Japanese that are based on lines in relation to one another, however, there's greater tolerance for ambiguity. For one thing, the many homonyms in the Chinese language rely upon varying intonations. This means that additional clarification is often needed when speaking, usually by writing in the air the logogram specific to spoken sound and its intended meaning.

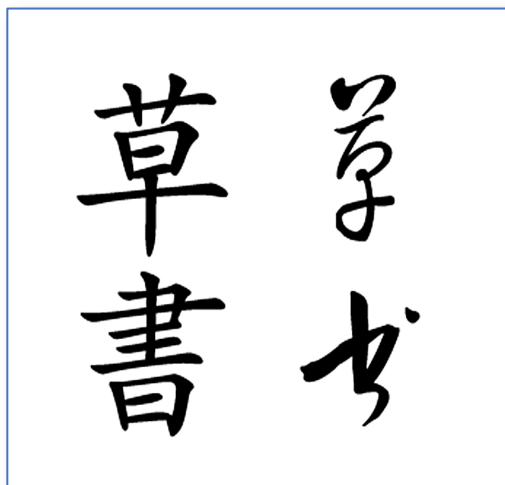
Below: The same sound of the word for “horse” [Mǎ] could represent several other words; though their logograms are unique to them.

Mǎ	Mǎ	Mǎ	Mǎ	Mǎ
吗	玛	码	马	蚂
([question indicator])	Agate ([used in compounds])	Yard (number - pile - stack)	Horse	Ant

For another, Asian culture is based upon effective group dynamics, a dynamic that its writing system fosters. Such things as ambiguity in communication are resolved by an increased effort on the part of both the receiver and the sender. Illegibility is also appreciated and highly valued as a form of calligraphy as seen in the cursive and grass scripts in Chinese or the Zen texts in Japanese, with the latter indecipherable to the unpracticed.

The process for cursive calligraphy, for example, seemingly with the goal of creating a virtually indecipherable line, is unique among writing styles but characteristic of Chinese culture's appreciation for gestalt. In several ways, it is among the most exhilarating of styles because it offers freedom from having to make conventional sense.

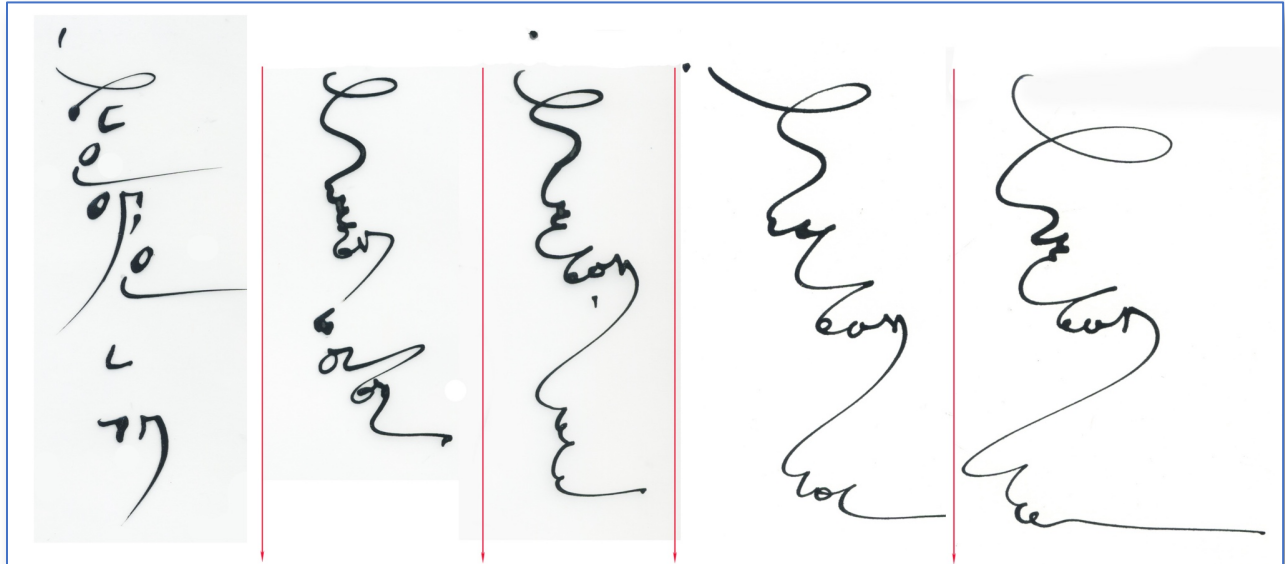
Cursive combines both the conceptual and graphic momentum that consists of the word one has in mind along with the abandonment of deliberateness. How one handles that thrust is clear from the resultant expressive quality of the line.



The Chinese characters for "cursive script" written in both regular, then cursive scripts

However, to move outside of the constraints of the box, we first need one. A meaningless abstract line across a page has no conceptual protagonist. The psycho-emotional relationship between the writer and the lines on the page is missing. As a result, there are far fewer existential dimensions involved and so, reduced expression possible except motion for its own sake.

On the other hand, when there *is* a specific word at play it creates neurological tension between the beginning and the end of cursive words. Imagine for yourself the inner feeling involved when you create a meaningless expressionistic line across a paper for its own sake, and then write a specific word across a page; the sensations are completely different.



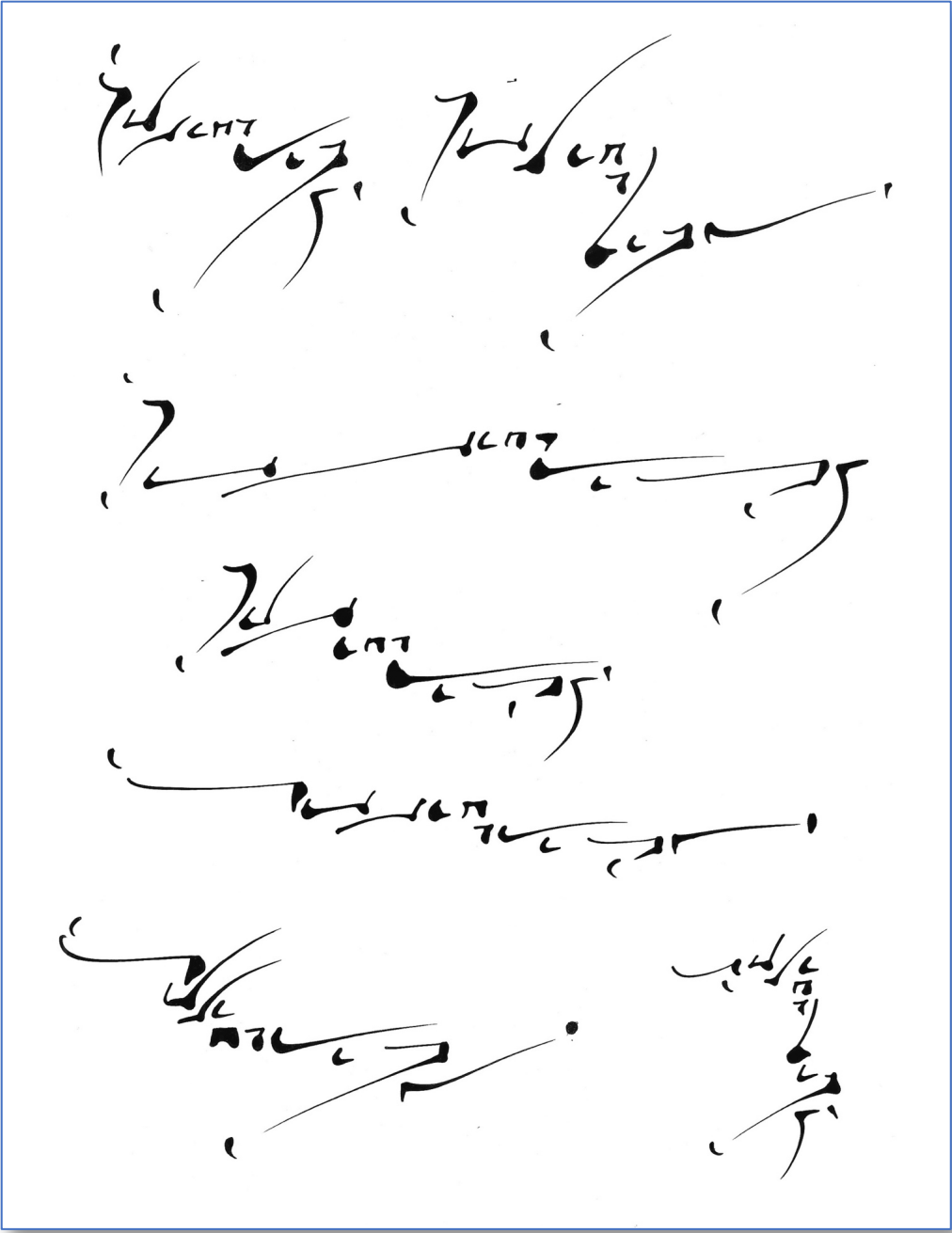
Above is the text "wherever I am" written formally in Elia script on the left, then written loosely and rapidly, that is to say cursively, in examples going to the right. The loose forms show remarkable consistency of shape even when the abstraction increases. It can do so because the reality of a specific word creates and actual tension from beginning to end.

This kind of parallel path taken by the writer and the created lines is not possible with an open-ended line because there is no real event going on outside of the *idea* of an abstracted line.

Meanwhile, Elia script goes beyond the restrictions of both the Latin alphabet and Asian logograms since there's no need for the individual letters to maintain a consistent ratio of their elements, nor is it mandatory to stay along a single baseline.

It also does not provide model forms as do fonts, nor does it present fixed line ratios that are found in Asian logograms. This makes it that each word's letters and overall composition must be created anew as the word is being written.

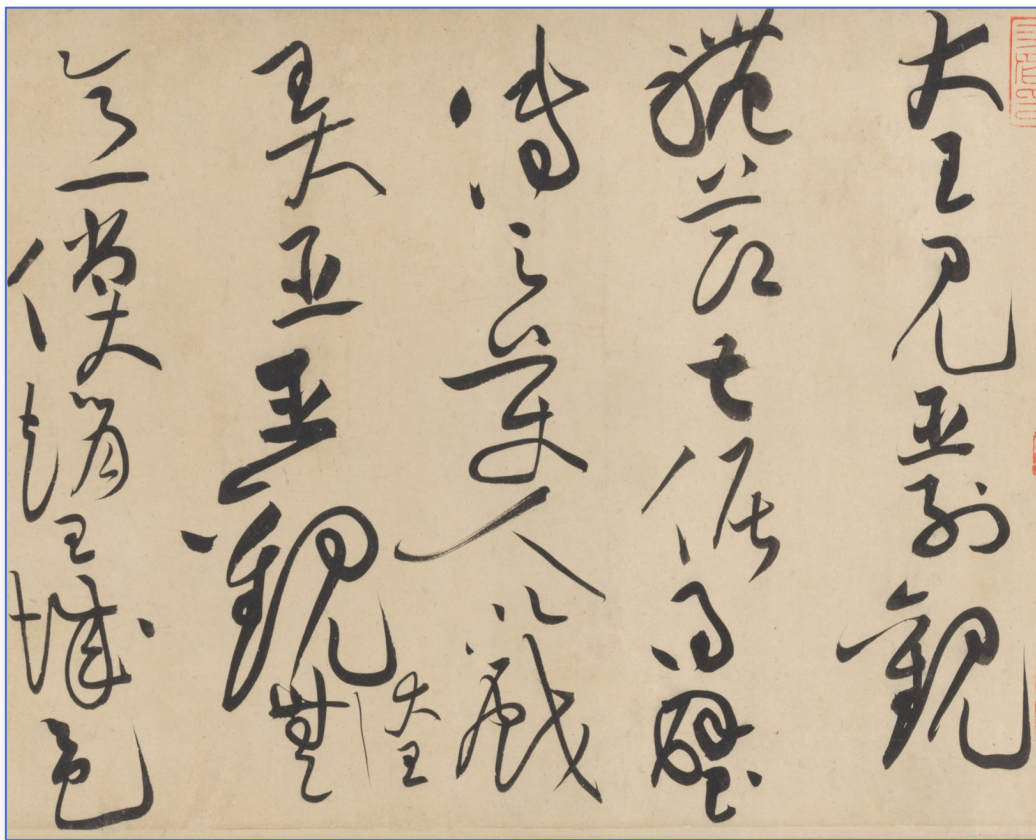
This freedom of composition still retains a foothold on familiar ground: the same spelling rules remain of left-to-right letter sequence even if they end up nestled in one another. Below are some of the possible variations of the word "solidarity, and there could be many more.



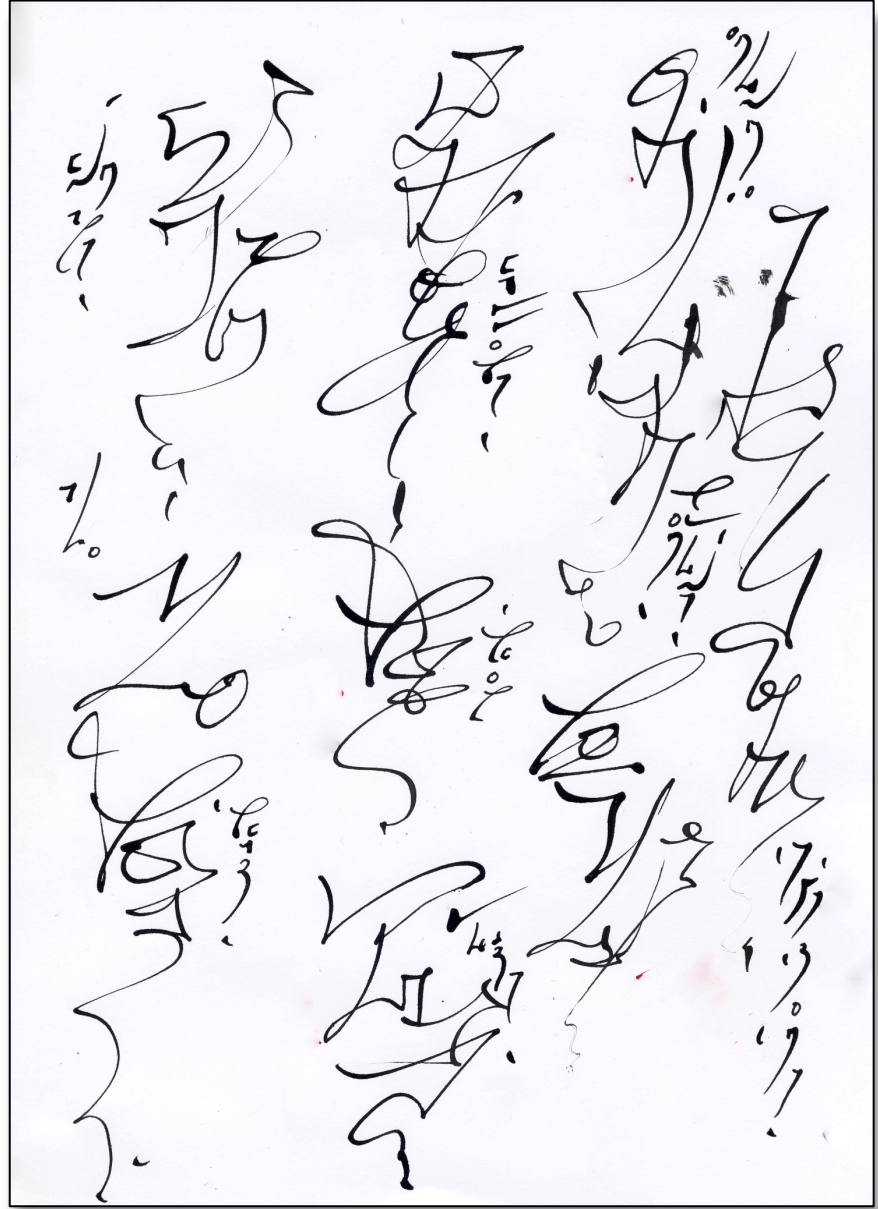
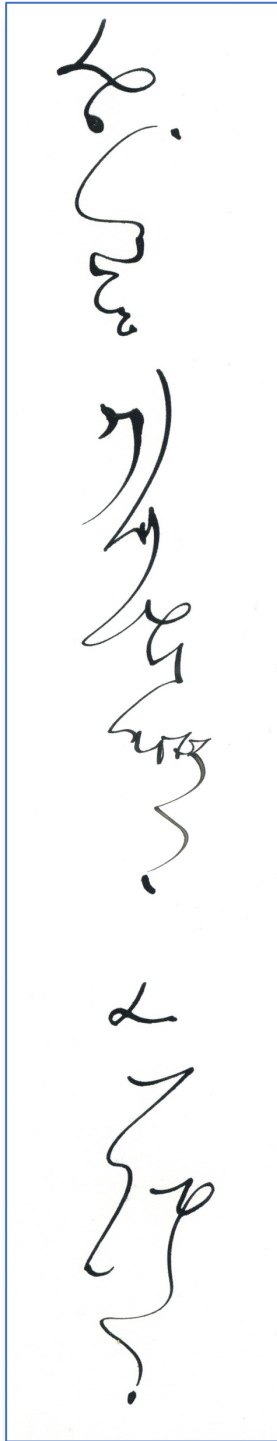
The system provides only principles, not constricting rules. The more letters to a word, the more variables come into play. What makes these variables more valuable is that they're not executed outside of the system's usual structural rules, but inherent to it. As such, Elian script develops both the left and right hemispheres simultaneously.

Add up all these factors: the option to increase baselines, to select which line is lengthened and how long, where to place the dot, the degrees of angles between lines, and it's obvious that many variables must be decided by the writer.

The script also can expand into illegibility along the lines of the cursive Chinese and Japanese calligraphy mentioned above. This freedom of movement while leaving traces of one's feelings has many consequences in how one moves through daily life.



Huang Tingjian (1045-1105) *Detail from Biography of Lian Po-*



Left: "In the moonlight I saw" excerpt from poem by Patrick M. Hayden

Above: "Humans are what happens ..." C.C. Elian

In summary, the minimal constraints on the writer's motion through the field of the writing space, means that with Elian script, there's extraordinary freedom for a writer to move across the page, and therefore within themselves.

This page and the next: works in Elian script, followed by works in Chinese logograms.



親黨賓客於名都大郡皆賦歛吏人
而復望風從之安與任隗舉奏諸二千
免官者四十餘人竇氏大恨但安隗素
時竇憲復出此武威明年北單于為
塞北地空餘部不知所屬憲日矜已

巧狀層峯數尋蒼色如煙
合一片盤根似蘚
接連常藉竹池

風舞之摺屢青一帶平岡子
木相心在應門若解子只宜漁父
日古求

可長之天

又言是... 諸佛國... 又問... 諸外... 諸隆... 諸見... 相維... 合心... 四大... 此

移翠... 蒼絕... 近身... 而... 兒... 獨杖... 慕

LINKS TO RELATED MATERIAL

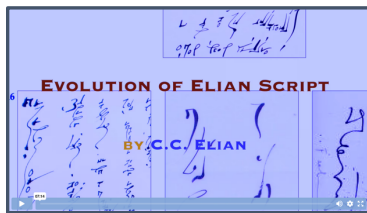
PDF discussing various nuances of Elian script

https://www.ccelian.com/Elian_Script_Variations.html



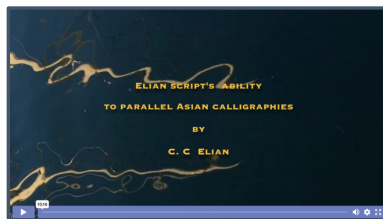
Video on the evolution of Elian script—from rigid code to calligraphic instrument.

https://www.ccelian.com/Elian_Script_Evolution.html



Video on Elian script's potential to parallel Asian calligraphies

https://www.ccelian.com/Asian_Calligraphies_Elian_Script.html



Letter Arts Review article on Elian script.

https://www.ccelian.com/CC_Elian_LAR_Article.html



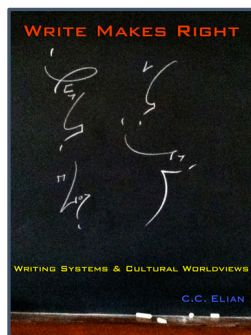
Write Makes Right – Writing Systems & Cultural Worldviews by C.C. Elian.

A monograph on how the Latin alphabet and logograms develop different brain hemispheres and their way of prioritizing information: individual versus group.

Beyond any utilitarian aspect, the way that a society *must* physically form its writing system shapes both its culture and the worldview of those that use it. Individuality is fostered with the Latin alphabet's stand-alone symbols, and group cohesion with logogram's holistic representations.

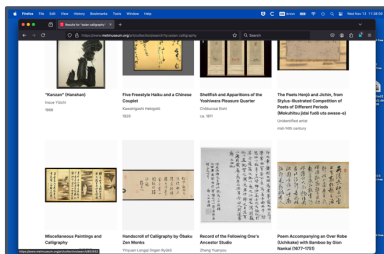
Elian script also offers a synthesis of both cultures, one of individual freedom combined with group responsiveness.

<https://www.amazon.com/Write-Makes-Right-Cultural-Worldviews-ebook/dp/B004Z1DGEW>



Link to the Metropolitan Museum's comprehensive collection of Asian calligraphy. Many of the high-resolution images are downloadable and in the public domain.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search?geolocation=China&material=Calligraphy>



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