

# Chinese Writing

09/27/2016



# Writing System

- Communication system
- Means of social control
- Earliest Chinese writing
  - Oracle-bone script
  - Late Shang Dynasty (2,000BC)
  - 汉字 *han zi* ‘Chinese characters’

# Dialectal Differences

- 水 shui ‘water’: logograph (a written character that represents a word or phrase)
  - [swei] Standard Chinese
  - [fei] Northwestern Xi'an dialect
  - [suəi] Eastern Yangzhou dialect
  - [sy] Wu dialect of Wenzhou
  - [ʃøy] Yue dialect of Guangzhou
  - [tsui] Min dialect of Xiamen

# History of Chinese Script

- 仓颉 Cang Jie
  - Legendary figure who invented Chinese writing through observing the patterns of animal tracks



# Development of Chinese Script

- Oracle-bone script Shang
- Bronze script Zhou
- Seal script Qin
  - Great seal and small seal (clerical script)
- Standard script Han
- Simplified standard script 1965
- Link

# Pictographic Origin

FISH

(*yú*)



HORSE

(*mǎ*)



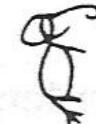
ELEPHANT

(*xiàng*)

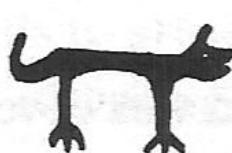


COW

(*niú*)



The graph for *quǎn* 'dog'

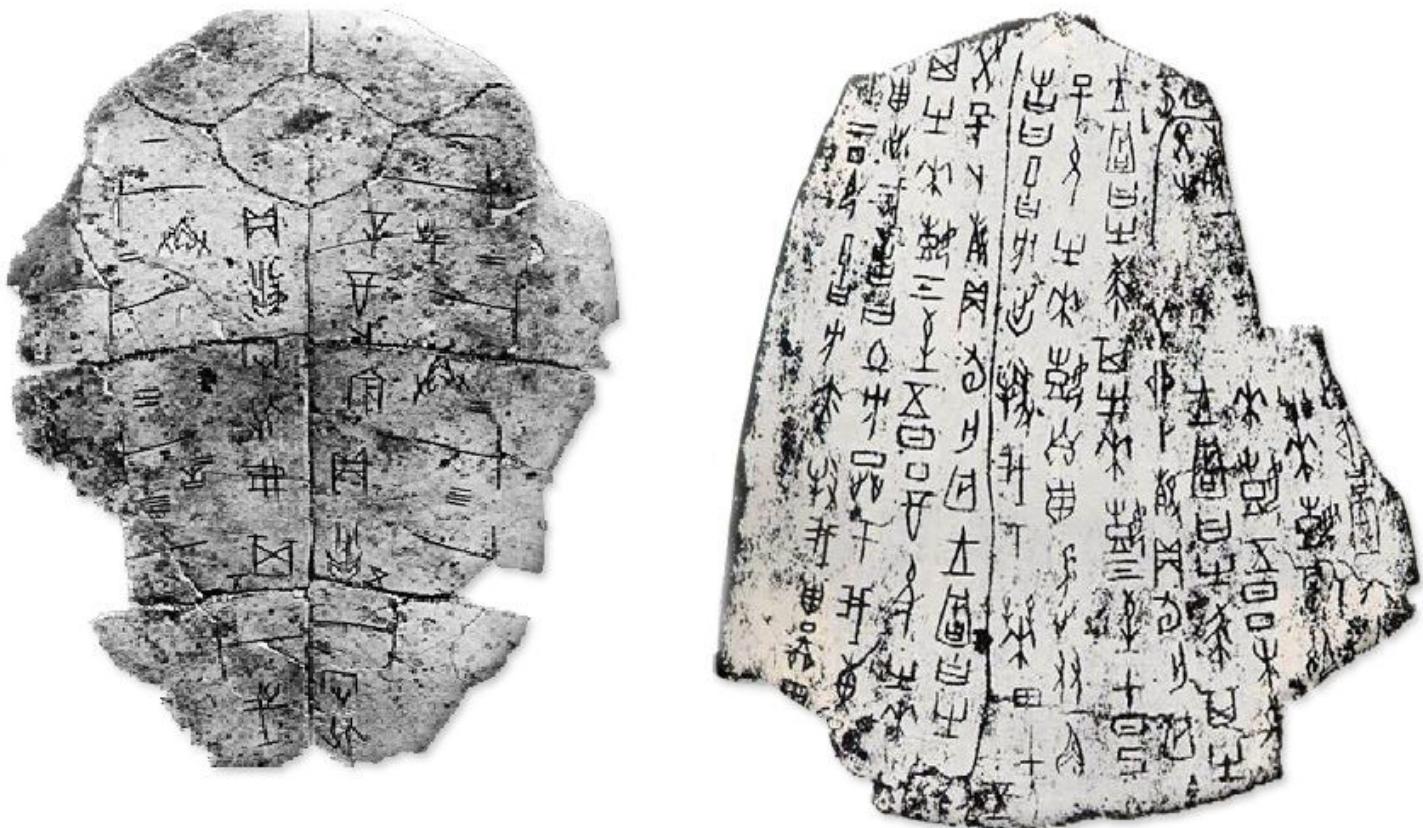


# Oracle-bone Script

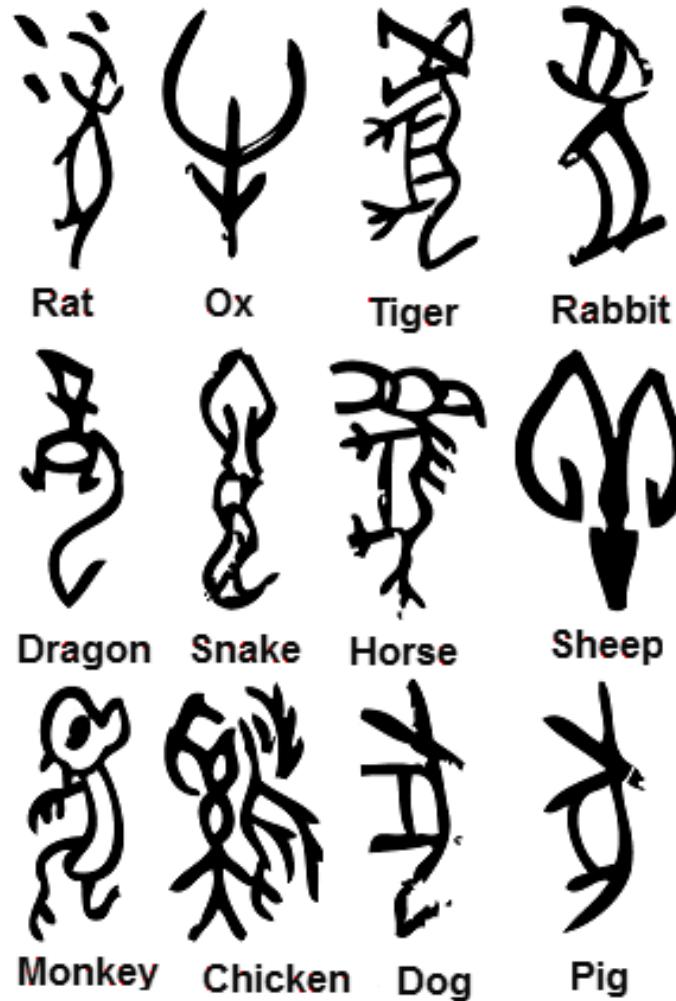
- Shang Dynasty (16<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> Century BC)
- 甲骨文 *Jiaguwen* ‘oracle-bone script’
- Bones or turtle shell



# Oracle-bone Script



# Oracle-bone Script: zodiac signs



# Bronze Script

- Western Zhou Dynasty (11<sup>th</sup>–770BC)
- *Jinwen* ‘bronze script’
- Bronze vessels



# Bronze Script

Modern graph	Early Western Zhou	Late Western Zhou	Spring and Autumn period
tiān ‘sky’	人	天	天
bèi ‘shell’	貝	貝	貝
huǒ ‘fire’	火	火	火
mǎ ‘horse’	馬	馬	馬

# Script Development

- General tendency toward a linear and regular form
  - Straighten the strokes
  - Convert rounded strokes to sharper angles
- Spring and Autumn Period (770-403BC)
  - Use of the script spread to all levels of society
- Warring States Period (403-221BC)
  - Diversity among the scripts of the various states and regions

# Seal Script

- Qin Dynasty (221-207BC)
- Unification of the entire country
- Standardization
  - Weights, measures, currency, legal statutes, and script
- Qin script: *Zhuanshu* ‘seal script’
  - *Lishu* ‘clerical script’ – used by clerks employed by the government; simplified form of the standard seal script

# Seal Script



RAT



OX

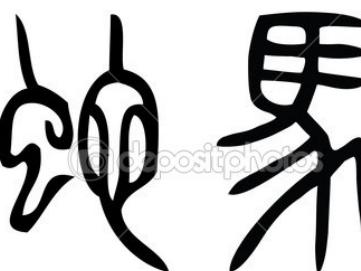


TIGER

RABBIT



DRAGON



SNAKE



HORSE

GOAT



MONKEY



ROOSTER



DOG

PIG

Traditional:

鼠	牛	虎	兔
龍	蛇	馬	羊
猴	雞	狗	豬

Simplified:

鼠	牛	虎	兔
龙	蛇	马	羊
猴	鸡	狗	猪

# Standard Script

- Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD)
- Western Han (206BC-24AD)
  - Clerical script was the official form
  - Losing the pictorial nature; convenience was the overriding principle
  - *Kaishu* 楷书 ‘standard script’
    - Still in use today!

	Shang bone script	Zhou bronze script	Warring States script	Seal script	Clerical script (Han)
1. ‘child’	子	子	子	子	子
2. ‘cloud’	云	云	云	云	云
3. ‘water’	水	水	水	水	水
4. ‘year’	年	年	年	年	年
5. ‘silk’	丝	丝	丝	丝	丝
6. ‘be born’	生	生	生	生	生
7. ‘eye’	目	目	目	目	目
8. ‘fruit’	果	果	果	果	果
9. ‘tripod’	鼎	鼎	鼎	鼎	鼎
10. ‘deer’	鹿	鹿	鹿	鹿	鹿
11. ‘wise’	聖	聖	聖	聖	聖
12. ‘buy’	買	買	買	買	買

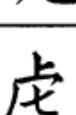
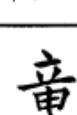
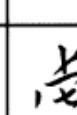
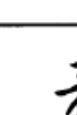
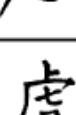
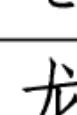
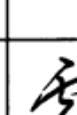
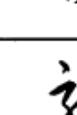
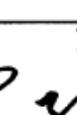
# Simplified Script

- People's Republic of China (1949-)
- 雲 → 云 yun ‘cloud’
- 禮 → 礼 li ‘ritual’
- 醫 → 医 yi ‘doctor’
- 麗 → 丽 li ‘beautiful’
- 門 → 门 men ‘door’

憂愁

‘depressive’ 忧郁

Link:  
calligraphy

		Regular forms			
		tiger	dragon		
ancient graphs					
oracle bone					
large seal					
small seal				Cursive forms	
clerical				tiger	dragon
standard					
early simplification					
20th century simplification					
					
					

# The Character Dictionary

- 说文解字 *Shuowen jiezi* ‘On graphs and composite graphs’
  - 许慎 XU Shen (206BC-220AD)
- Six categories

象形	Pictographs (picture)	3.9%
指事	Ideographs (symbol)	1.3%
会意	Compound ideographs (semantic-semantic)	12.3%
形声	Phono-semantic compounds	81.2%
假借	Loan characters	1.2%
转注	Derivative cognates	0.07%

# Pictograms

- ☉ 日 ‘sun’
- ☽ 月 ‘moon’
- 山 ‘mountain’
- 水 ‘water’

# Ideograms

-  上 'above'
-  下 'below'
-  本 'root; origin'
-  末 'end'

# Compound Ideographs

- 日 + 月 = 明 sun + moon = bright
- 木 + 木 = 林 wood + wood = forest
- 戈 + 止 = 武 dagger + foot = military
- 人+ 人= 从 human + human = follow

# Phono-semantic Compounds

- Radical and phonetic

- 女 + 马 = 妈

‘woman’ + [ma] = ‘mother’ [ma]

- 口 + 口 + 马 = 骂

‘mouth’ + [ma] = ‘to scold’ [ma]

- 木 + 婴 = 樱

‘wood’ + [in] = ‘cherry tree’ [in]

# Loan characters

- One character with multiple meanings
- 北 *bei* ‘back’ (背)  
→ *bei* ‘north’
- 永 *yong* ‘swim’ (泳)  
→ *yong* ‘forever’
- 凤 *feng* ‘phoenix’  
→ *feng* ‘wind’ (风)

# Derivative Cognates

- One meaning with multiple characters
- ‘old’ 老 考
- ‘head’ 页 首

# Structure of Chinese Characters

- The shape

- One part: — 工 木 戈
- Two parts: 林 明 妈 汉 (horizontal)
  - 字 李 焦 出 (vertical)
  - 回 国 店 闹 (inside a border)
- Others: 坐 非 噩 夹 , 品 森 晶 焱

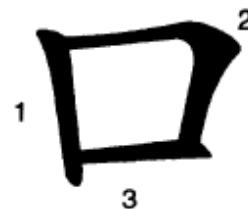
# Complex Numerals

Number	Pinyin	Ordinary	Complex
One	yi	—	壹
Two	er	二	貳
Three	san	三	參
Four	si	四	肆
Five	wu	五	伍
Six	liu	六	陸
Seven	qi	七	柒
Eight	ba	八	捌
Nine	jiu	九	玖
Ten	shi	十	拾
Hundred	bai	百	佰
Thousand	qian	千	仟

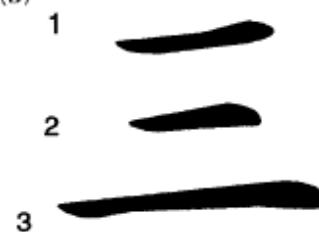
# Stroke Order

- 1) Top to bottom
- 2) Horizontal before vertical
- 3) Outer before inner finished
- 4) Left to right
- 5) Middle before sides
- 6) Close bottom last

(A)



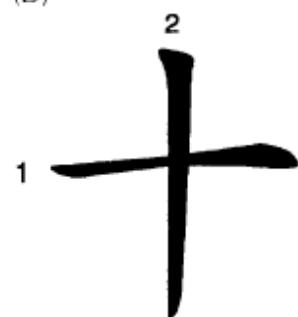
(B)



(C)



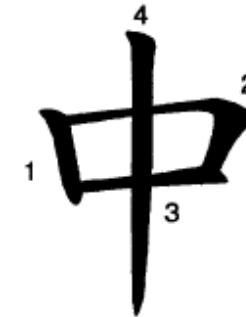
(D)



(E)



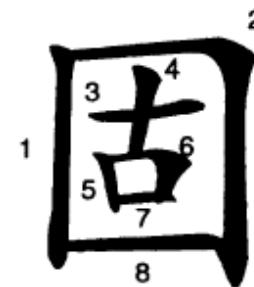
(F)



(G)



(H)



(I)



# Exercise

- How many strokes are written?
  - 1) 明 ming (2): bright
  - 2) 唱 chang (4): to sing
  - 3) 求 qiu (2): to beg

# Homophony

- A syllable shape may correspond to more than one morpheme

Pinyin	Character	Meaning	Old Chinese
sù	粟	millet	*sjok
sù	肅	solemn	*sjiwk
sù	宿	stay	*sjuk
sù	夙	dawn	*sjuk
sù	素	white	*saks
sù	诉	tell	*sŋaks
sù	檄	inform	*sok

# Romanization?

石室詩士施氏，嗜獅，  
誓食十獅。  
施氏時時適市視獅，十時，  
適十獅適市。  
是時，適施氏適市。  
施氏視是十獅，恃矢勢，  
使是十獅逝世。  
施氏捨是十獅屍，適石室。  
石室溼，施氏使侍拭石室，  
石室拭，施氏始試食是十獅屍。  
食時，始識是十獅屍是十石獅屍。  
試釋是事。

shí shì shī shì shī shì, shì shī,  
shì shí shí shī.  
shī shì shí shí shì shì shī, shí shí,  
shì shí shī shì shì.  
shì shí, shì shī shì shì shì.  
shī shì shì shì shí shī, shì shī shì,  
shī shí shī shī shī.  
shī shì shí shì shí shī shī, shì shí shì.  
shí shì shī, shī shì shī shī shī shī shī shī shī,  
shí shī shī, shī shì shī shī shī shī shī shī.  
shí shí, shī shí shī shī shī shī shī shī shī shī shī.  
shī shì shì shì.

## *Translation*

A poet named Shī lived in a stone house and liked to eat lion flesh, and he vowed to eat ten of them. He used to go to the market in search of lions, and one day at ten o'clock, he chanced to see ten of them there. Shī killed the lions with arrows and picked up their bodies, carrying them back to his stone house. His house was dripping with water so he requested that his servants proceed to dry it. Then he began to try to eat the bodies of the ten lions. It was only then he realised that these were in fact ten lions made of stone. Try to explain the riddle.

# How Many Characters

- 1.5k basic literacy
  - 2.5k-3k functional literacy
  - 4k university students
  - 50k dictionary
- 
- 2,400 account for 99%
  - 3,800 account for 99.9%