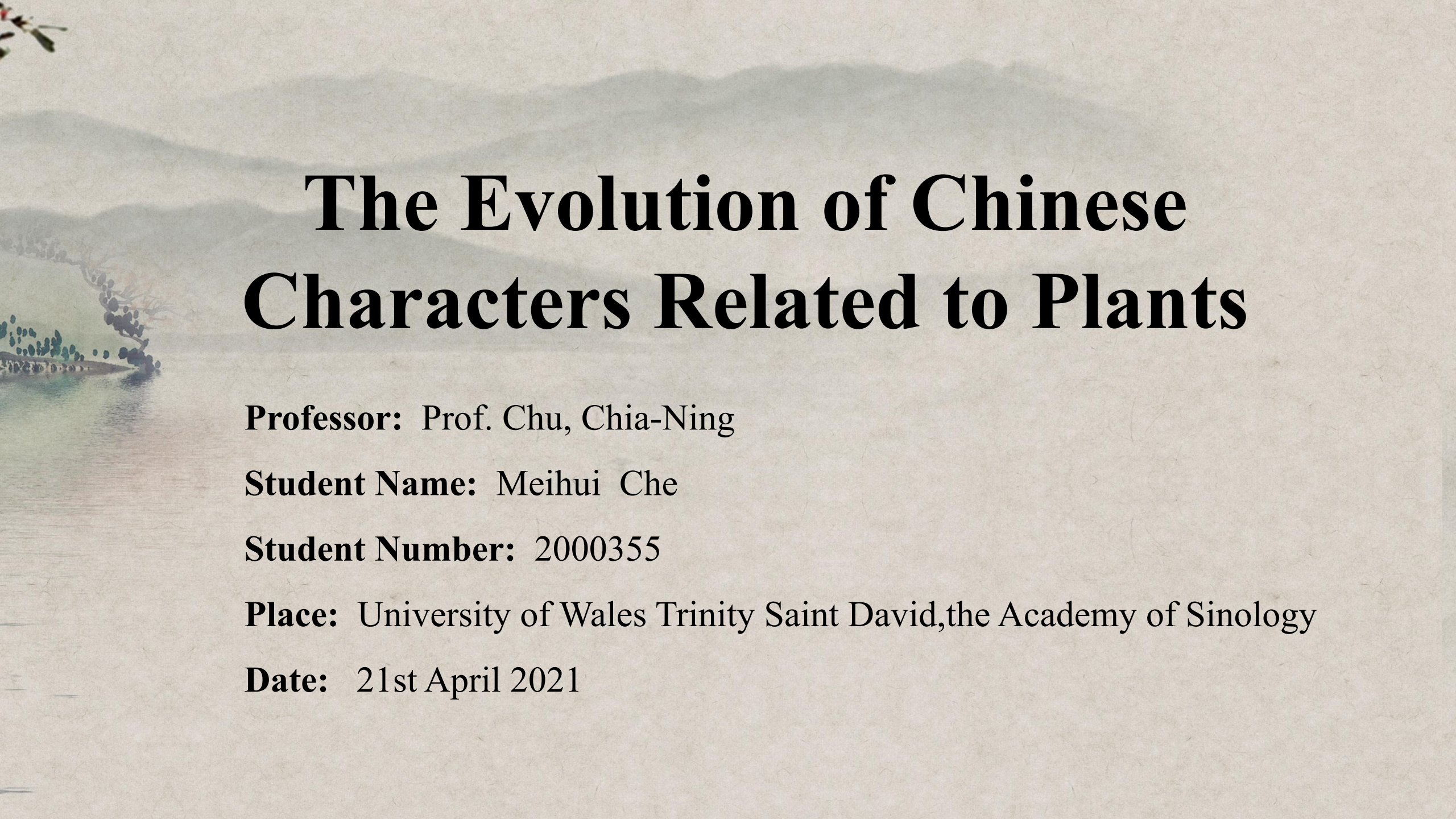




The Evolution of Chinese Characters Related to Plants

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Outline:

1. **Examples** of Chinese characters composed by the core character " 木 " .
2. **Examples** of Chinese characters composed by the core character " 巾 " .
3. **Examples** of Chinese characters composed by the core character " 禾 " .
4. **A brief summary** to the evolution of Chinese characters related to plants.

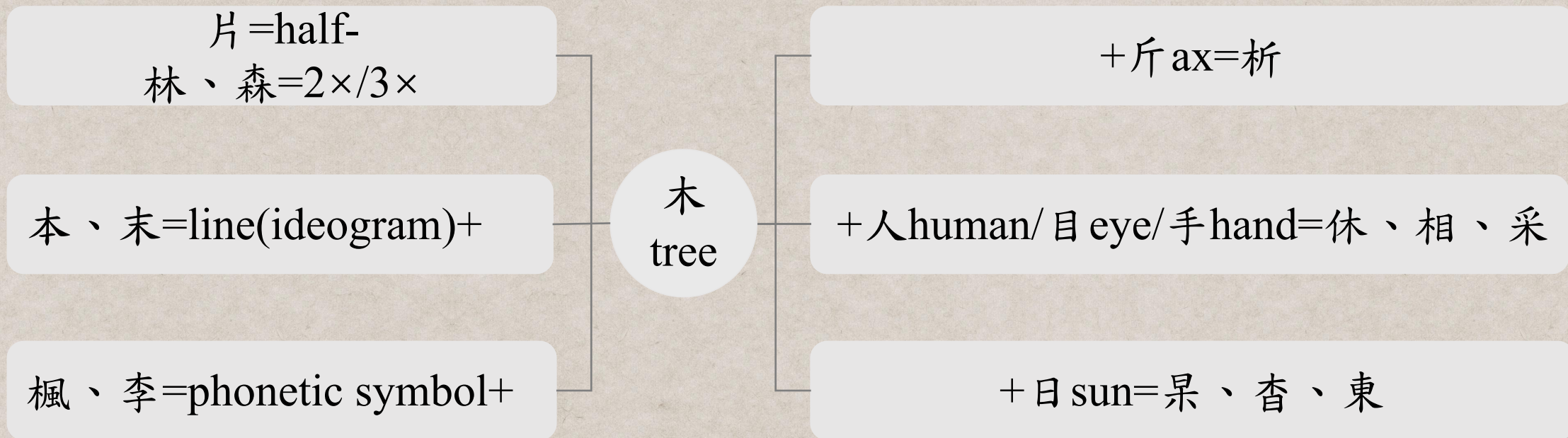
The Evolution of Graphic Form

Methodology of this study

Relationship of characters

Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
				 tree	Pictogram
				 sprout	
				 grain plant	

The three main components of Chinese characters related to plants



Part of the group of Chinese characters composed by the core character " 木 "

Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
				 fruit	Pictogram
				 birds' nest	

The Evolution of Graphic Form:

果: three fruits → one fruit with four dots → 田 (field)

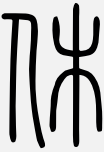
Highlight features

Analogical change of pictographic symbols

巢: only a nest → add one bird → three birds → 𣶒 (river)

Addition of pictographic symbols

Analogical change of symbols

Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
				 pick	Associative compound
				 look at	
				 rest	

The Evolution of Graphic Form:

采：three fruits are gone → one hand → 爪 (claw) 相：rhombus and round → rectangular

Analogical change of semantic symbols

Linearization

The Cultural Consciousness of Tree in Chinese Characters

Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
				 plum	Semantic- phonetic character

The Evolution of Phonology:

李 [dzli] = semantic symbol: tree 木 + phonetic symbol: child 子 [tsi]

↓
[li]

← Loss of voiced sound

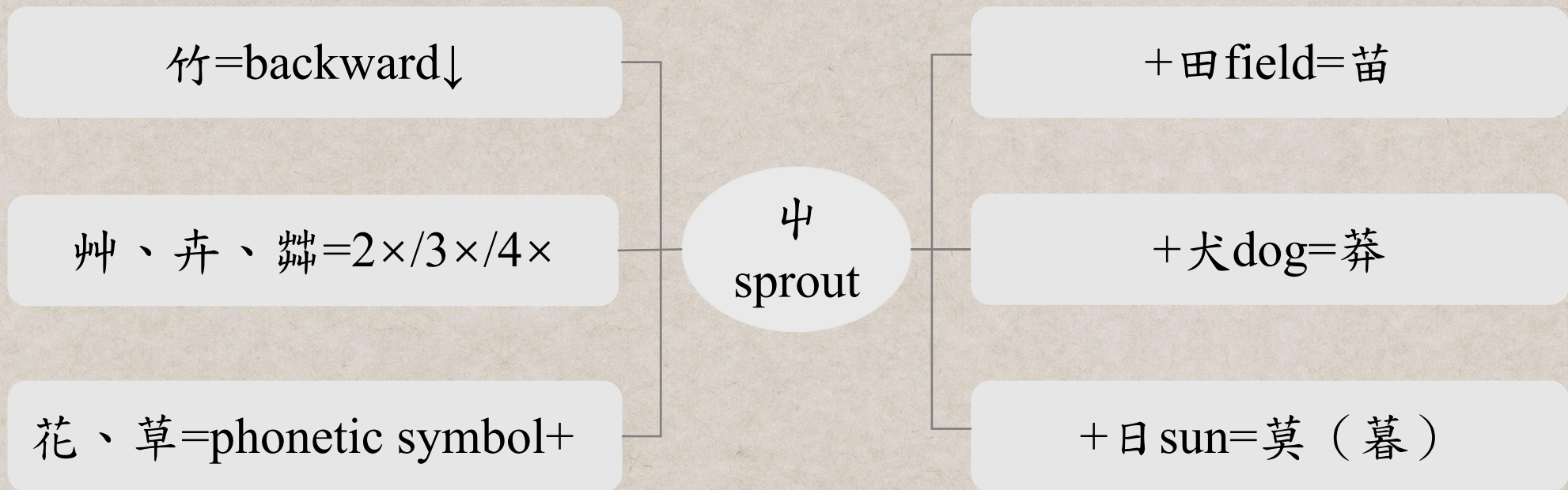
Grammata Serica Recensa: "plum tree, plum (*Shl*); baggage (*Tso*); loan for envoy (*Tso*). The graph has 'tree' and 'child'."

Tso-chuan: "Envoys come and go 行李之往來" (person) → baggage(object)

↑ The change of meaning

行李	李 [dzli]	子 [tsi]
行使	使 [sli]	吏 [li]

← Phonetic loan



Part of the group of Chinese characters composed by the core character " 屮 "

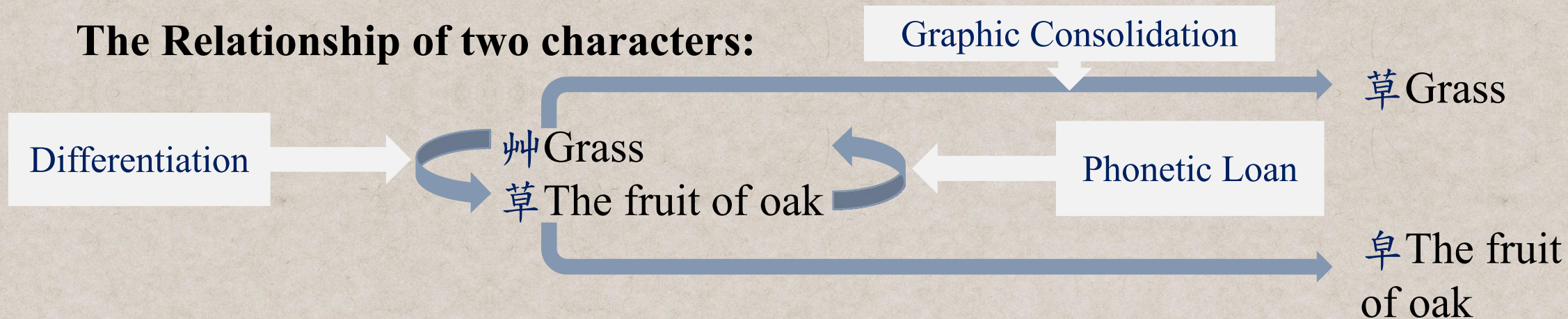
Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
	 grass	Associative compound
	 fruit of oak	Semantic-phonetic character

Shuowen jiezi: “Grass. ”

Shuowen jiezi: “The fruit of oak. ”

Shuowen jiezi zhu: “ is used to represent , so  was invented to represent . ”

The Relationship of two characters:



Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
				 evening	Associative compound

Grammata Serica Recensa: “ *mâg / muo- / m u evening, late (*Shĭ*);
loan for *mâk / mâk / m o not, not have(*Shĭ*). ”

Ancient and Modern Forms:

The sun set in the grass 莫

Addition of one semantic symbol(日)

Younger graph

The Evolution of Graphic Form:

Small seal script 𠂔



Regular script 大



Alteration of one semantic symbol

Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Simplified script	Six Scripts
				 	Pictogram→ Semantic-phonetic character

The Evolution of Graphic Form:

Pictogram(Drawing of flower)→Semantic-phonetic character(semantic symbol 艸+phonetic symbol 化 → 化) ← Simplification of Chinese script

Grammata Serica Recensa: “^{‘huá (huā)} flower, blossom (*Shĭ*); ^{‘huà} name of a mountain (*Shu*). ”

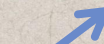
Ancient and Modern Forms:

	[huā] flower	→	花	← Dispersal of the lexical loads of graphs
華	[huá] gorgeous,magnificent	→	华	
	[huà] Mount Huashan	→		

Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
	 Sonchus	Semantic- phonetic character
	 tea	

Differentiation

The Evolution of Pronunciation:

[da]  [du] → [t^hu]
 [tɕ^hia] → [tɕ^hα]
 [de] → [te] → [ti]

茶
 茶
 tea

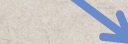
Grammata Serica Recensa: “

**d'o / d'uo / t'u and *d'a / d'a / c h'a*

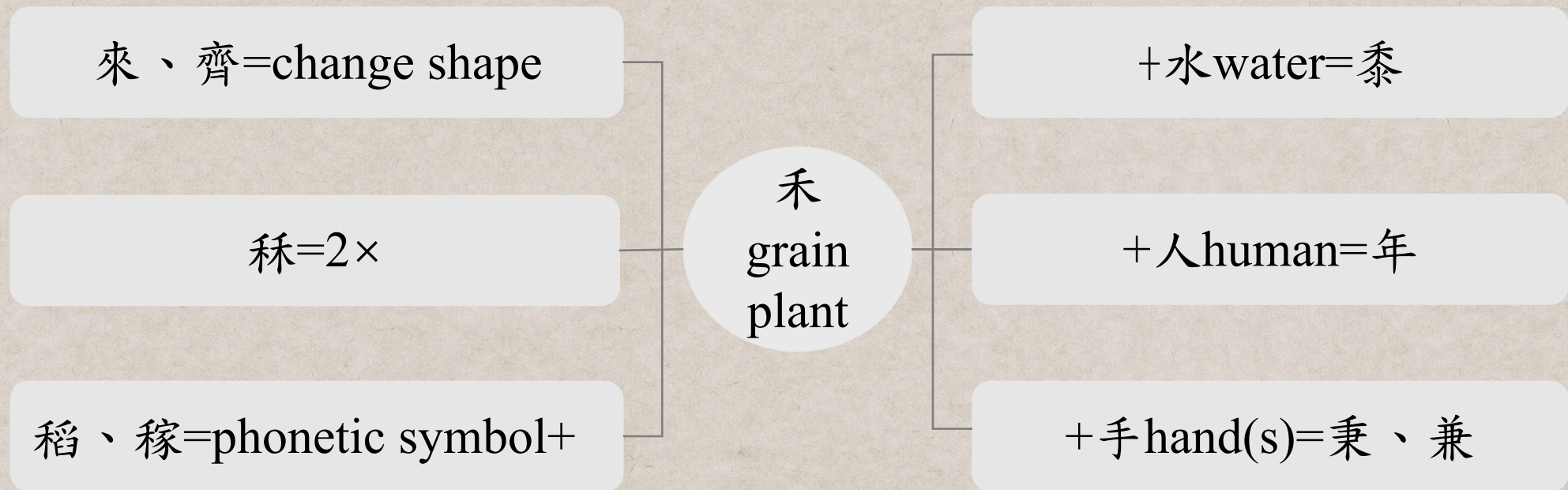
some kind of Sonchus or Lactuca (*Shĭ*) ;
bitter(*Shĭ*) . ”

The Evolution of Graphic Form:

茶 = semantic symbol 艸 + phonetic symbol 余


 茶 bitter Sonchus
 茶 tea(a drink made by pouring hot water onto dried and cut leaves of the tea plant)

Cognates



Part of the group of Chinese characters composed by the core character " 禾 "

Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
				 year	Associative compound

The Evolution of Graphic Form:

Alteration of one semantic symbol

Symbolization

Bronze inscription 𠂔 → Bamboo and silk script 秊 → Regular script 年

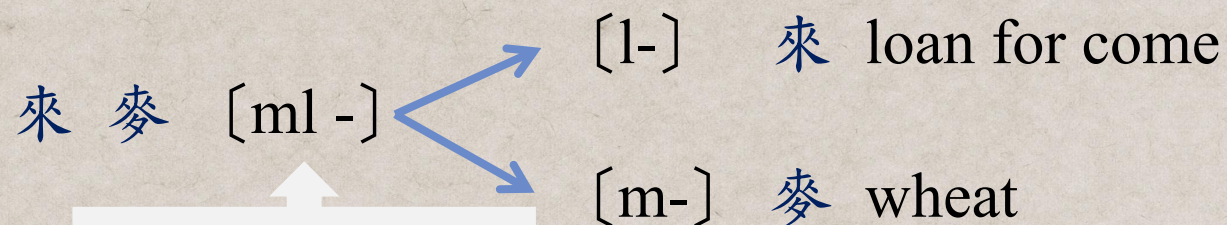
Grammata Serica Recensa: “harvest (*Ch'unts'iu*); year (*Shĭ*). The graph has 'man' carrying 'grain'.”

Shuowen jiezi zhu: “The meaning of year comes from the annual harvest of cereal. 年者，取禾一孰也”

Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
				 come	Pictogram
				 wheat	

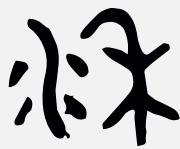
Grammata Serica Recensa: “ *lǝg / lǝi / l a i a kind of wheat(*Shĭ*) ; loan for come (*Shĭ*).
The graph is a drawing of a wheat plant. ” “ “ *mwǝk / mwǝk / m a i wheat (*Shĭ*) . ”

The Evolution of Pronunciation:



Cognates

Differentiation

Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
			 millet	Associative compound
			 fragrant	

Shuowen jiezi: “ Glutinous millet. Millet can be made into wine. The graph indicates that millet is in the water. ”

Shuowen jiezi: “Fragrant. The semantic symbols are glutinous millet(黍) and sweet(甘). ”

The Evolution of Graphic Form:

Alteration of semantic symbols' position

黍 Oracle bone inscription → Bronze inscription → Small seal script

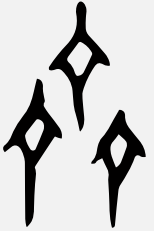
Addition of one semantic symbol(水)

香 Bronze inscription → Small seal script → Regular script

Alteration of semantic symbols (口 → 甘) (黍 → 禾 , 甘 → 日)

Simplification

Analogical change

Oracle bone inscription	Bronze inscription	Bamboo and silk script	Small seal script	Regular script	Six Scripts
				 neat	Pictogram

Shuowen jiezi: “The neat appearance of the wheat. ”

The Evolution of Graphic Form:

Highlights three vertical lines

Complication+Linearization

Bronze inscription→Bamboo and silk script→Small seal script→Regular script

Addition of pictographic symbols(two horizontal lines)

Add two knives, rhombuses→lines

Bronze inscription	
	
wife	neat

The Comparison between 妻 and 齊:

Grammata Serica Recensa: “ The graph is a drawing of the hair-pins of the married woman 妻. the 'equal', the 'match' of the husband. ” “The upper part in the character 妻 is 齊. ”

Summary:

The Evolution of Graphic Form

- Highlight features
- Add symbols
- Analogical change of symbols
- Alteration of symbols' position
- Linearization
- Symbolization
- Simplification
- Complication

The Relationship of characters

- Phonetic Loan
- Differentiation(Cognates)
- Dispersal of the lexical loads of graphs(Ancient and Modern Forms)
- Graphic Consolidation

Summary:

Learning Characters in Groups

➤ **The rule of evolution** : derive from the known to the unknown.

木→中、禾、片、林、森、本、末、朱、果、巢

中→竹、艸、卉、𦰩

禾→秝、來、齊、黍

➤ **The principle of Chinese character making** : deduce simplicity into complexity.

木→杲、杳、析、休、相、采、李、楓

中→苗、莽、莫、茶、草、華

禾→年、秉、兼、香、稻、稼

➤ **The cultural consciousness of ancestors**: Take trees as the core component.

- Pictogram
- Ideogram
- Associative compound composed by the same components

- Associative compound composed by the different components
- Semantic-phonetic character

References

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