

# An inquiry into the relationship between sound and meaning of Chinese characters



- Module code: SICH6012
- Module tutor: Zhou Bixiang
- Student Name: Zhou Qian
- Student Name: 1804447
- Date: 12th November 2021

look at primitive society



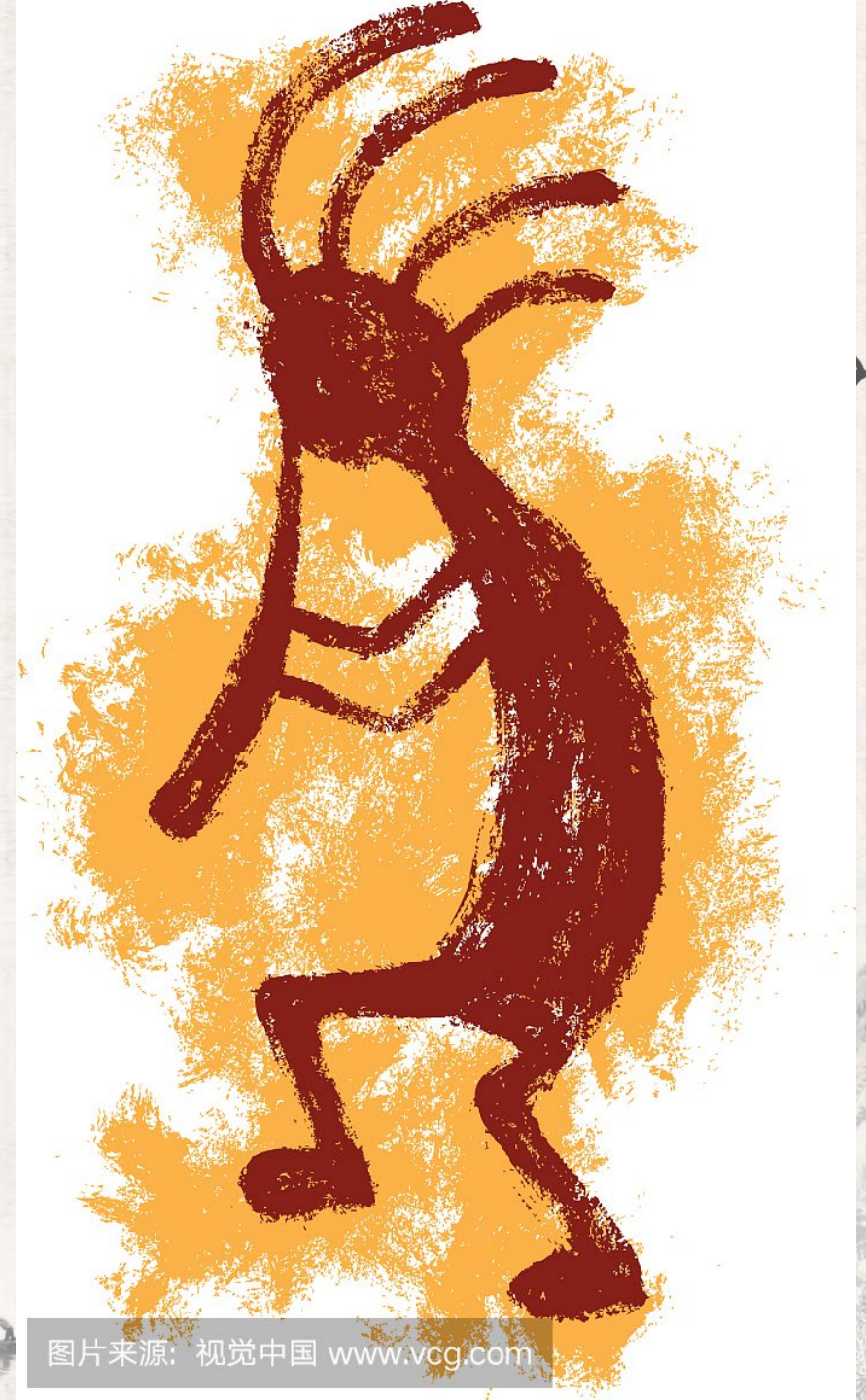
Primitive A



Primitive B

What would Primitive A do at this time?

People expressed their meanings not only by physical actions but also by sounds, and after more and more sounds that could express meanings, language was formed.





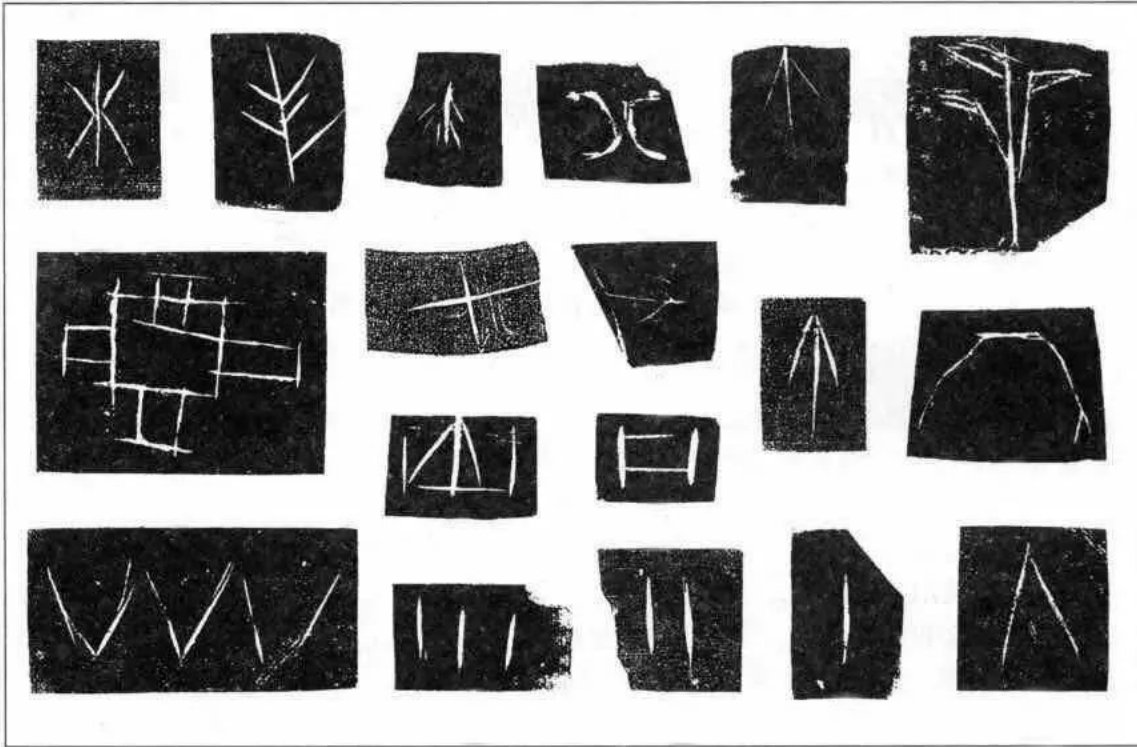
Similarly, as more and more people used such symbols to remember things, then some common things also had agreed symbols, which formed our earliest pictographs.



We can see that in the early days, the shape of the symbols and the sound of the language were directly linked to the meaning, so how were the shape and sound-related?

voice & shape





*Original symbols of archaeological discoveries*

In terms of the relationship between the sound and the meaning of the word, it is clear that at the very beginning there was not a one-to-one correspondence, but rather a convention.



There is no such thing as a name that is originally appropriate but is named by common agreement, and if it is agreed, the name is appropriate, and if not, the name is inappropriate.

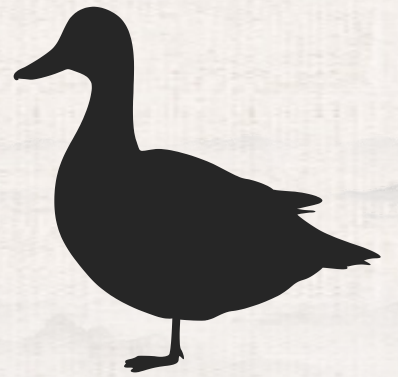
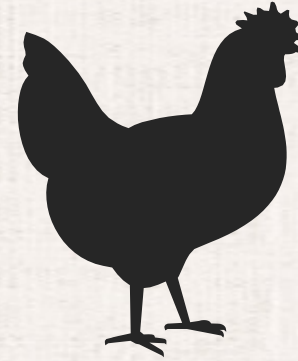




Mr. Zhang Taiyan in his *Phonetic Origins* has this view: “Language does not come out of thin air, the ancient pronunciation of the character ma 馬 must mean ‘horse’, the ancient pronunciation of the character niu 牛 must mean ‘cow’ ”

# Onomatopoeia

Not only the human voice that is simulated, for example, the ancient pronunciation of the character *ji* 雞 *ya* 鴨 *e* 鵝 are the words that are simulated by the animal voice.

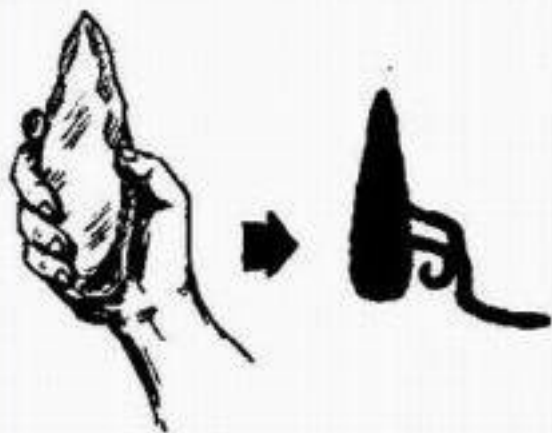


Why is there a so-called “sound and meaning  
spring from the same source” 聲義同源, or “  
sound and meaning common if close in  
pronunciation” 音近義通

Cognate 同源詞

父 fù

𠂔



原是一只手拿着一把石斧的形状,表示从事劳动的男人,例如“田父”就是“农夫”。后来常指“父亲”;也作为男性长辈的通称,如“祖父”、“伯父”、“叔父”。

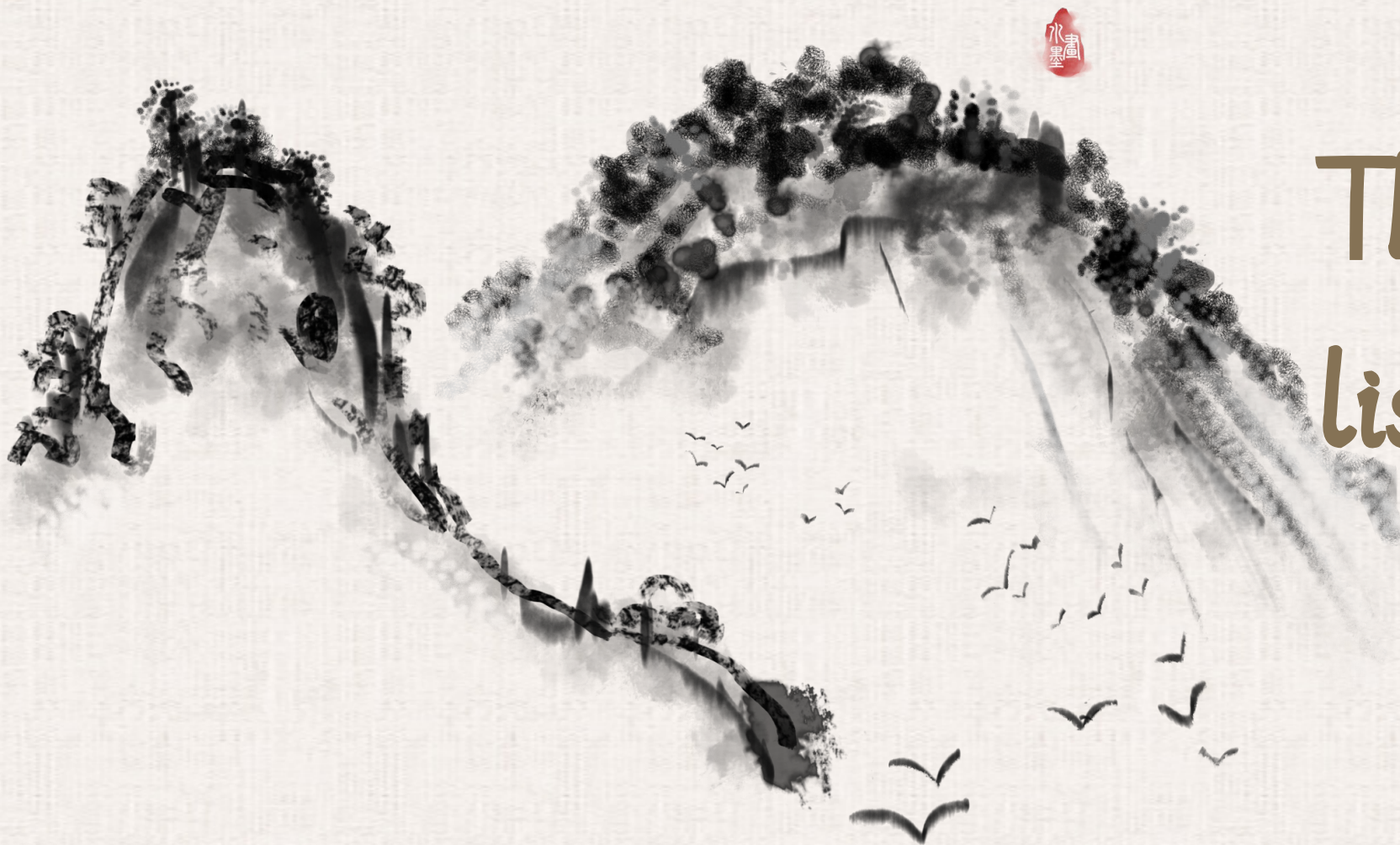
𠂔  
𠂔  
𠂔  
父  
父  
步  
父

This is a theory that Mr. Duan Yucai has repeatedly argued in *Shuowen Jiezi*. This brings us to another interesting part of the phonetic-syntactic relationship in Chinese characters, namely, the part of the phonetic side of a character that represents its meaning.

“All sounds from a certain sound radical  
usually have a certain meaning”

凡從某聲，多有某義。





Thank you for  
listening