



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

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<i>Module Code:</i> SIHE 4001	<i>Student number:</i> 2512218
<i>Module title:</i> An Introduction to Chinese Philology	
<i>For completion by marker:</i> <i>Comments:</i>	

AI Acknowledgement

☐ I have not used AI in my assignment

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

☒ I have used AI in my assignment

During the preparation of my coursework, I used artificial intelligence tools(AI) in a limited, transparent, and ethical way, in line with the University's AI usage policy. Below is a detailed record of when and how I used AI.

I acknowledge the use of the following AI tools during the preparation of my work:

1.ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com>)

Date: [1/2/2025-5/2/2025]

Purpose: Language translation.



The Four Seasons in Ancient Chinese Character Form

Module code: SIHE 4001

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Date: 5 February 2026



春
Spring



夏
Summer



秋
Autumn



冬
Winter

小红书号: 2807125384

春 chūn Spring

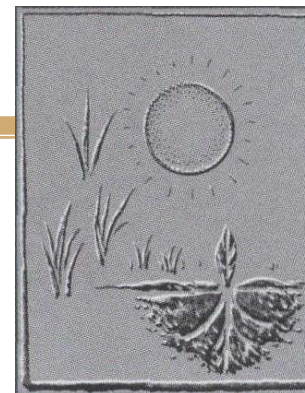
The Shuowen jiezi 《說文解字》

- 推也。
to push forward.
- 从艸从日，艸春時生也；屯聲。

春

The Shuowen jiezi zhu 《說文解字注》：

尚書大傳曰。春、出也。萬物之出也。从日艸屯。日艸屯者、得時艸生也。屯字象艸木之初生。屯亦聲。會意兼形聲。



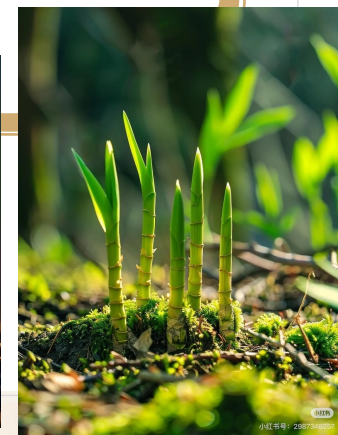
春 chūn Spring

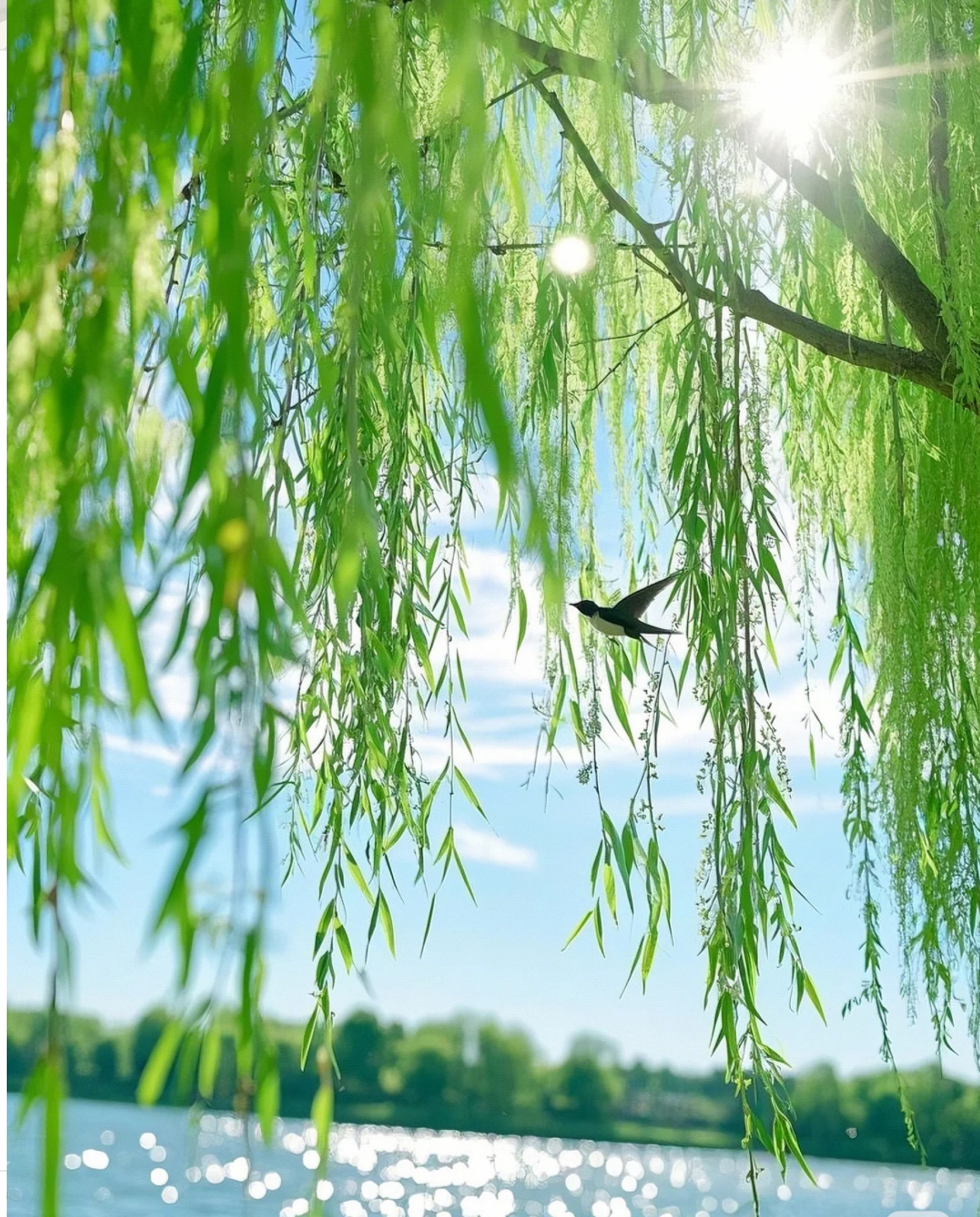
The Shuowen jiezi 《說文解字》

春

- 推也。
to push forward.
- 从艸从日，艸春時生也；屯聲。

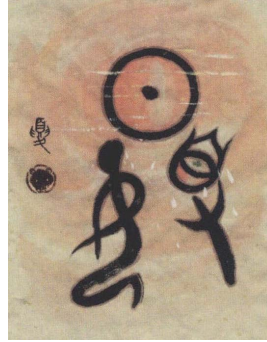
The component *ri* (日) represents the sun and the component *cao* (艸) refers to grass or young plants. The component *tun* (屯) carries both phonetic and semantic functions. Its original meaning is “difficulty”, referring to the resistance that plants encounter as they break through the soil to sprout.







夏 *xia* Summer



日 Sun



首 Head





秋_{qiu} Autumn



秋_{qiu} Autumn



Oracle-bone inscriptions



Cricket



Great seal script



Small seal script



The Shuowen jiezi

- 秋，禾穀孰也。
- The ripening of grain.



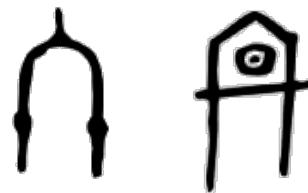
- Turning after harvest.
- The visual perception of ripened yellow grain.



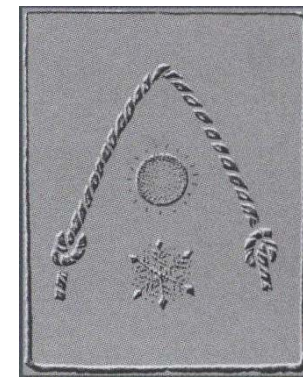
冬 *dong* Winter



Oracle-bone inscriptions



Bronze inscriptions



Small seal script



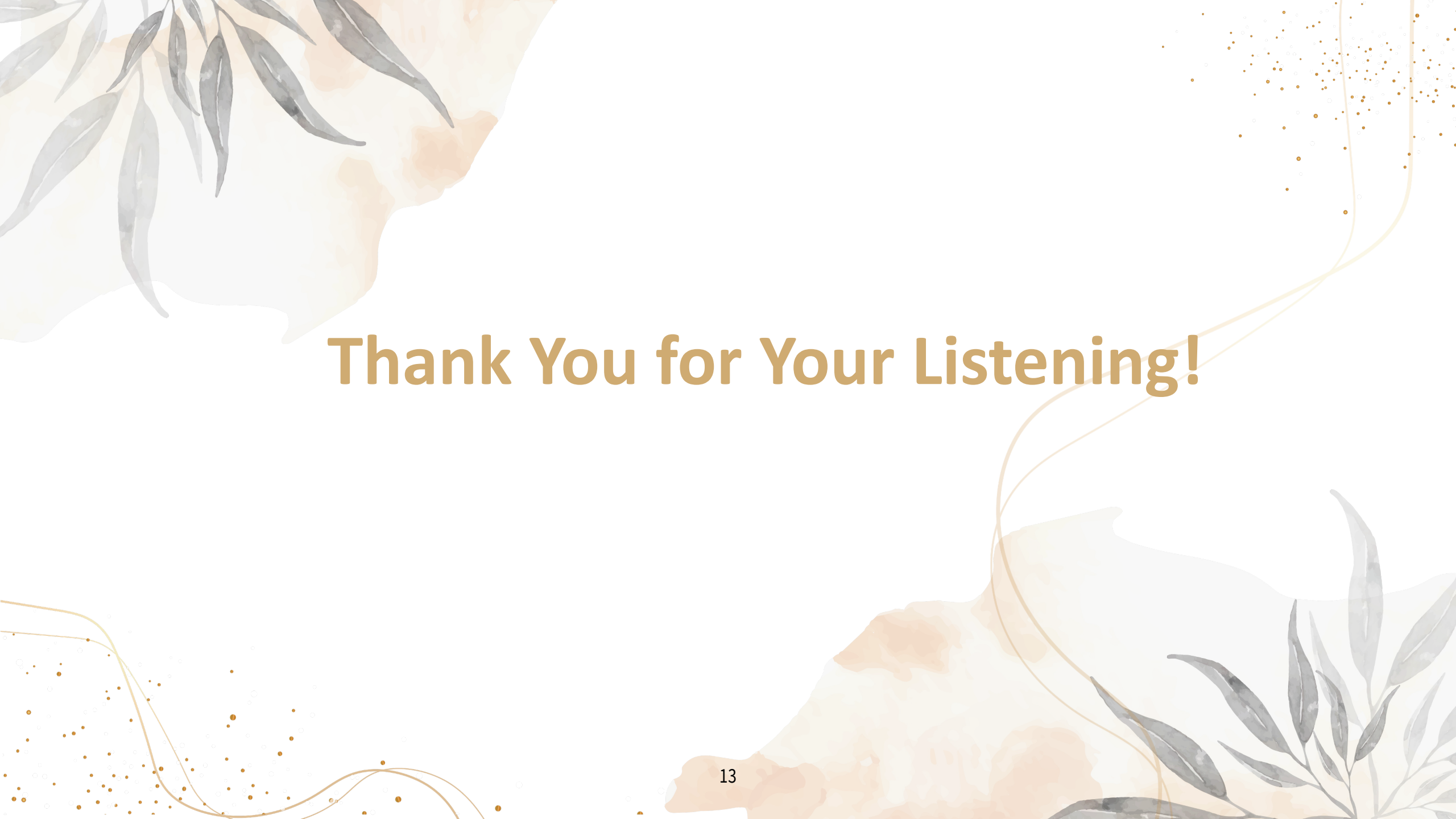
Regular script



Conclusion

- Linearisation
- Simplification
- Differentiation and combination of phonetic and semantic components





Thank You for Your Listening!

Topic: The Four Seasons in Ancient Chinese Character Form

1. Introduction

Good morning! In this oral presentation on philology, I would like to introduce the ancient Chinese characters representing the Four Seasons: *chun* (春), *xia* (夏), *qiu* (秋), and *dong* (冬).

Early Chinese writing was largely **pictographic** in nature, this original writing system not only shaped the visual form of the script but also reflected and influenced Chinese culture.

Chinese ancestors created characters through wisdom and experience. Each Chinese character **possesses** /pə'zɛsɪz/ a logical internal structure and carries its own story of development. Now, let us turn to the ancient forms of the Chinese characters of the Four Seasons.

2.1 春

The first one comes to the character 春, which means Spring, the first season of a year.

(图片)

It has now been written in regular script as 春 and pronounced *chūn*.

(春) (说文原文+字形)

In *Shuowen Jiezi*, the earliest comprehensive dictionary of Chinese characters, the form of *chun* is recorded in the Small Seal Script(小篆). the **compiler** Xu Shen defines the character as *tui* 推, which means “to push forward.”

Qing-dynasty philologist Duan Yucan further explains this definition in his *Shuowen Jiezi zhu*. He interprets 春 as the emergence of life force (生命力) at the beginning of the year, when all things begin to grow. (加原文)

From the perspective of structural **decomposition** /diːkɒmpə'zɪʃn/, the character *chun* consists of three graphical components: *ri* (日), *cao* (艸), *tun* (屯)。

The component *ri* (日) represents the sun and The component *cao* (艸) refers to grass or young plants. The component *tun* (屯) carries both phonetic and semantic /sɪ'mæntɪk/ functions. Its original meaning is “difficulty”, referring to the resistance that plants encounter as they break through the soil to sprout.

(配图 字形+草木发芽)

When these components are combined, they form a vivid image of spring: plants begin to grow under the warmth of the sun. This composition highlights the most distinctive essence of spring—the revival of vegetation and the life force of all creatures.

(圖片)

2.2 夏

The character *xia* (夏) has two main meanings: one refers to “the Chinese nation,” historically used as a self-designation /ˌdeɪzɪgˈneɪʃn/, and the other refers to summer. Because *xia* appeared in multiple graphic forms in its ancient scripts, its original structure and interpretation remained controversial /ˌkɒntreɪˈvɜːʃ(ə)l/ in scholarship. However, these different forms have eventually standardised and simplified into the regular-script form 夏 used today, with its two main meanings—Chinese nation and summer.

Here, I will focus on an oracle /ˈɒrəkl/-bone form that is most relevant to the meaning of season summer.

This associative compound character consists of two pictographs (象形字) 日 and 頁: the top part 日 is a sun-like element and a kneeling human figure which represents the head located under the sun. This form captured the most distinctive and noticeable feature of summer – the feeling of heat and sunshine.

2.3 秋

Next comes to the third season – autumn.

The character *qiu* (秋) had various forms across different stages during ancient time. In the oracle-bone inscriptions, *qiu* appears in the form of an insect, like this, quite vivid. The Oracle bone inscription scholar Guo Moruo (1892-1978) identifies the early inscription of *qiu* as a cricket. As it chirps /tʃɜːrps/ prominently in autumn, this insect image served as a natural indicator of this season.

In the stage of the Great Seal Script, a pictograph of 火 (fire) was added alongside the insect pictograph. By the Small Seal Script period, however, the insect component was replaced by grain (禾), while the fire element was retained. In *Shuowen Jiezi*, Xu Shen defines *qiu* as “the ripening ˈraɪpənɪŋ of grain.”, presenting autumn as the season of harvest. The fire component has a few interpretations, the first refers to burning after harvest, for reducing pest damage and preparing fields for sowing next year. The second meaning is that the fire reflects the visual perception of ripened ˈraɪpənd/ grain, which appears yellow at maturity, associated with autumn.(图)

2.4 冬

The graphic evolution of the character *dong* (冬) is relatively stable. In the oracle-bone inscription, *dong* (冬) is an ideographic character depicting /dɪ'pɪktɪŋ/ the end of a rope, marked with two small dots, symbolising an ending and denotes winter. In **bronze** /brɒnz/ inscription, an element of sun was added to highlight that this contains an abstract timely meaning that refers to the final season of a year.

In the seal script, the sun element was removed and replaced by the ancient graph for ice, highlighting winter's feature of cold and freezing. This form was eventually standardized as the modern regular-script character 冬. The component representing ice was eventually **simplified** into two dots.

3.Conclusion,

Indeed, Culture is the **soul** /səʊl/ of a nation, and the writing system is the vehicle of culture. As a **pictographic** writing system, traditional Chinese characters not only reflect ancient people's observation and understanding of nature, but also **crystallise** /'krɪstəlaɪz/ their wisdom.

Throughout the historical development of Chinese characters, the writing form showed a trend of **linearisation** /ˌlɪniərəɪ'zeɪʃən/ and simplification. Moreover, phonetic and semantic **components** /kəm'pəʊnənts/ have gradually **differentiated** /ˌdɪfə'renʃiətiəd/ and combined. Thus most modern scripts are no longer purely pictographic; but their **evolution** /ˌi:və'luːʃ(ə)n/ remains **traceable**. All such things can be clearly observed through the **analysis** /ə'næləsis/ of the characters of the four seasons—*chun*, *xia*, *qiu*, and *dong*.

By tracing characters back to their ancient forms and original meanings, we are able to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese character itself and its cultural foundations. In this sense, philology also serves as a key to unlocking the cultural treasures embedded in the script.

Thank you very much for your listening!