



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

<i>Student Name:</i> Qiyuan Wang	
<i>Module Code:</i> SICH4008	<i>Student number:</i> 2016002
<i>Module title:</i> Graphical and Etymological Study of Sinograms	
<i>For completion by marker:</i>	
<i>Comments:</i>	
<i>Marker's signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Provisional mark:</i>	
<i>NB.</i> All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

An overview of the structure and briefly meaning of the 耳 character

In this part, I would like to share about the briefly meaning of this character as well as the evolution of the Character 耳 in Chinese Script Styles.

1. The briefly meaning of the 耳 character

Based on the traditional six-fold classification, the Chinese character 耳 is an associative pictographic script. And there are two kinds of statements to explain the structure of this character:

- a. According to the <Shuowenjiezi> 《說文解字》, 耳 is defined as primarily serving the function of hearing.
- b. Based on <Guoyuhuoyongcidian>《國語活用辭典》, 耳 is defined 3 meanings. 1. Hearing organ of people and animals, 2. Objects with handles attached on both sides for easy carrying are commonly referred to as 耳, 3. Things that resemble the shape of ears, such as edible fungus and white tree fungus.

2. Evolution of the Character 耳 in Chinese Script Styles

The ear character in carapace and bone script  resembles the  outer contour of a person's left ear. And then as the script evolved into bronze inscriptions, the character for '耳' gained clearer internal strokes, making it more realistic compared to its earlier carapace and bone script. Later, in the Warring States period script , the horizontal strokes above and below the ear extended to the right. The shape of the character for 'ear' underwent significant changes, but overall, it still resembles the form of a human ear. In small script  the strokes on the outer side resemble the edge of an ear, depicting internal features, with a vertical stroke extending downward on the right side. Furthermore, there isn't much difference between clerical script much difference between the small seal script in the

depiction of this character. In standard script, the horizontal strokes above and below the ear character extend horizontally. Therefore, merely by observing the shape of 耳 character today. It's challenging to grasp its original form at the inception of character creation.

A summary of the meanings of characters containing 耳 radical

Shuowen Jiezi in 亼 radical section includes a total of 30 characters:

耳、聃、聒、耽、聃、瞻、耿、聯、聰、聽、聆、聃、聒、聃、聲、聖、職、聃、聃、
聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃

The ear is one of the most important organs among our senses. It is the only way we receive sound. Therefore, by summarizing the original meaning of the character ‘耳’ in *Shuowen Jiezi*, we can understand the importance ancient Chinese people attributed to the ear, as well as the corresponding culture and customs.

From the explanations in Yucai Duan's *Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*, I have summarized four categories to distinguish how ancient people used these characters.

1. Shape of the ear

In the traditional Chinese physiognomy book *Mayi Shenxiang* states, ‘ear... thick, firm and long all indicate longevity.’ This indicates that long and thick ear lobes have been considered auspicious since ancient times. In the *Shuowen Jiezi*, there are five characters used to describe the size of earlobes: 耳, 聃, 貼, 耽, 聃, and 瞻. Among them, except for 貼, which signifies small earlobes, the rest represent either long ear lobes or large earlobes.

As the meaning of large earlobes further extends, with larger earlobes natural dropping downwards, those closely adhering to the cheeks were referred to by ancient people as ‘耿’ and ‘聯’, both implying proximity to the cheeks.

2. Hearing

Duan's annotation in *Shuowen Jiezi* states, 'the primary function of the ear is hearing. Moreover, when it comes to listening to sounds, there are whispers and loud speaking. These represent two different forms of communication. Therefore, here things one can hear and others that one physiologically cannot. So I classify this category of into four subcategories.

2.1 Auditory perception

‘聽’ is hearing’. Yucai Duan commented, ‘When the eyes cannot cover everything, what the ears can perceive is called listening.’ It can be seen that the ears are in charge of hearing. Additionally, characters such as ‘聰’, ‘聆’, ‘聒’ are closely related in meaning to ‘聽’. Furthermore, apart from hearing everyday communication with others, the ear also listens to music. ‘聲’ in *Shuowen Jiezi* is defined as sound. Yucai Duan provides further annotation, ‘Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi and Yu are sounds. The sounds produced by silk, bamboo, metal, clay, leather and wood are all 音. There are subtle differences between ‘聲’ and ‘音’.

2.2 The way of listening

In real life, people communicate in different ways. Some prefer speaking softly, whispering in each other's ears, like the character ‘聒’, which in *Shuowen Jiezi* means ‘to speak close to the ear.’ On the contrary, others prefer speaking loudly, like ‘聒’, which means ‘to speak loudly.’

2.3 Auditory impairment

Reality is cruel. Someone are born unable to hear any sound. As stated in the *Shuowen Jiezi*, ‘聵’ means ‘being born unable to hear’. Similarly, 聵, 聵, 聵 and 聵 all mean ‘unable to hear’. Furthermore, more unfortunate than the deaf are those who have no ears at all. ‘聵’ in *Shuowen Jiezi* describes individuals without ears in the outskirts of Wu and Chu regions. ‘聵’ means ‘ears have fallen off.’

2.4 A good listener

People have diverse talents. Some individuals are intelligent. *Shuowen Jiezi* said, ‘聖’ means to be proficient. According to Yucai Duan’s commentary, ‘聖’ understand matters through what they hear. Additionally, some people possess good minds, remembering even the minutest details. Those with this ability were able to hold positions of responsibility as early as the Zhou dynasty. Therefore, in *Shuowen Jiezi*, 職 is described as to record small matters.

3. Visting

In our daily lives, when we encounter individuals who excel in some areas beyond our expertise, we often admire their reputation to visit them and ask questions. Therefore, the interpretation of 聘 as ‘visiting’ meaning in *Shuowen Jiezi*. Additionally, in ancient times, when nobles went out, they would ride in carriages. To showcase their status, they would adorn their horses with gold. So *Shuowen Jiezi* says, ‘𩇛’ is to adorn a horse’s ears with gold.

4. Military Discipline

In ancient times, warriors’ military achievements were often calculated based on the number of enemy heads they had taken. However, in the chaos of battle, it was impractical to both engage in combat and carry enemy heads simultaneously. Therefore, soldiers were ordered to cut off the ears of the enemies as proof of their military accomplishments. So, the character 𦍋 was used, as described in *Shuowen Jiezi*, ‘𦍋 is to cut off the enemy’s ears’. Additionally, if someone violated military law, they would have arrows pierced through their ears as punishment. Thus, ‘𦍋’ signifies arrows piercing through the ears.

Conclusion

The various character including 耳 radical in ancient time were predominantly used to describe aspects related to the shape of ear and its auditory functions. Regarding ear shape, there was a significant emphasis on the earlobes in ancient Chinese custom, a concept that

extended to later generations. Large earlobes were considered an auspicious trait. Concerning auditory perception, it is known that ancient people placed great importance on hearing, as sages, by listening to sounds, could fully discern the emotions of others. Finally, through characters such as 聒 and 聘, we gain insights into aspects of ancient customs regarding visiting guests and military punishments. Thus, by organizing the original meaning of the character 耳 and its various meanings within its radicals, we deepen our understanding of how ancient people perceived the significance of the ear.

Analyzing the Original Meanings Characters with 耳 Radical in *Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*

Module tutor Ms. Liu

Student name Qiyuan Wang

Student ID 2016002

Date 27 March 2024

Contents

- I. Briefly meaning of the 耳 character
- II. An overview of 耳 character structure
- III. A summary of the meanings of characters containing 耳 radical
- IV. Conclusion

I

Briefly meaning of
the 耳 character



On the traditional six-fold classification:

- Pictographic script

The briefly meaning of the 耳 character



According to the <Shuowenjiezi> 《說文解字》,

耳 is defined as **primarily serving the function of hearing.**

The briefly meaning of the 耳 character

耳

Based on <Guoyuhuoyongcidian> 《國語活用辭典》, 耳 is defined 3 meanings:

1. Hearing organ of people and animals,
2. Objects with handles attached on both sides for easy carrying are commonly referred to as 耳,
3. Things that resemble the shape of ears, such as edible fungus and white tree fungus.



II

Evolution of the Character 耳 in Chinese Script Styles

Evolution of the Character 耳 in Chinese Script Styles

Carapace and
bone script 甲骨文



Evolution of the Character 耳 in Chinese Script Styles

Bronze
inscriptions 金文



Character for 耳 gained clearer internal strokes, making it more realistic compared to its earlier carapace and bone script

Evolution of the Character 耳 in Chinese Script Styles

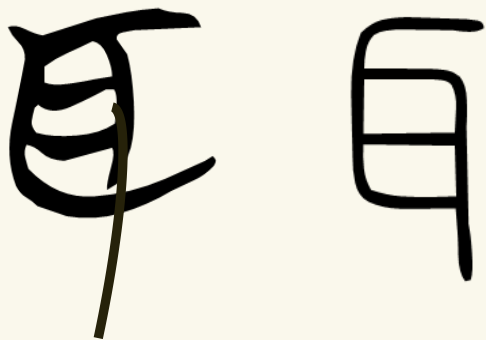
Warring States period
script 戰國文字



Character for 耳 gained clearer internal strokes, making it more realistic compared to its earlier carapace and bone script

Evolution of the Character 耳 in Chinese Script Styles

Small script 小篆



the strokes on the outer side resemble the edge of an ear, depicting internal features, with a vertical stroke extending downward on the right side

Evolution of the Character 耳 in Chinese Script Styles

standard script 現代文字



Merely by observing the shape of 耳 character today. It is challenging to grasp its original form at the inception of character creation

III

A summary of the meanings of
characters containing 耳 radical

Shuowen Jiezi in 耳 radical section includes a total of 32 characters:

耳、聃、貼、耽、聃、瞻、耿、聯、聊、聰、聽、聆、聃、聃、聃、聲、聞、
聖、職、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃、聃

Duan Yucai *Shuowen*
Jiezi Zhu in 耳 radical

Shape of the ear

Hearing

Visiting

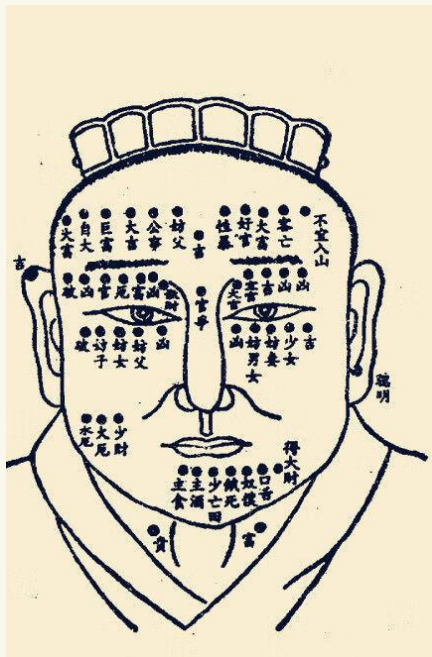
Military Discipline

III . I Shape of the ear

耳朵形狀

- 聃 — 耳聃也。从耳冫。下聃、象形。 — 春秋傳曰。秦公子聃者、其耳聃也。故曰為名。
- 聃 ①
- 聃 — 耳大聃也。从耳。尢聲。 — 《詩》曰：“士之聃兮。”
- 聃 — 耳曼也 — 段玉裁：「曼者，引也。耳曼者，耳如引之而大也。」
- 聃 — 聃耳也。从耳。詹聲。 — 南方有聃耳國。
- 聃 — 耳箸頰也。从耳。炗省聲。 — 邶風。耿耿不寐。傳曰。耿耿猶傲傲也。憂之聯綴於心。取義於此。
- 聯 — 連也。从耳。从絲。 — 耳連於頰。

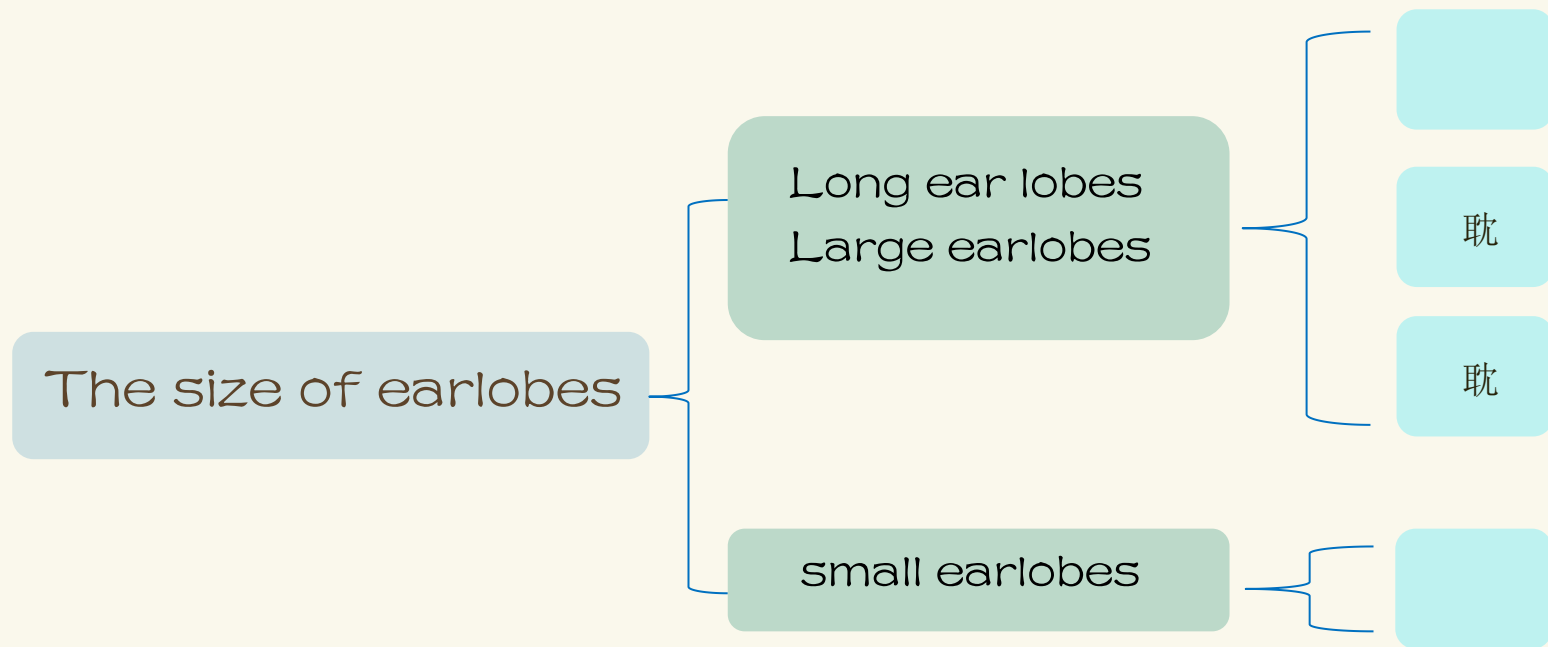
Mayi Shenxiang 麻衣神相



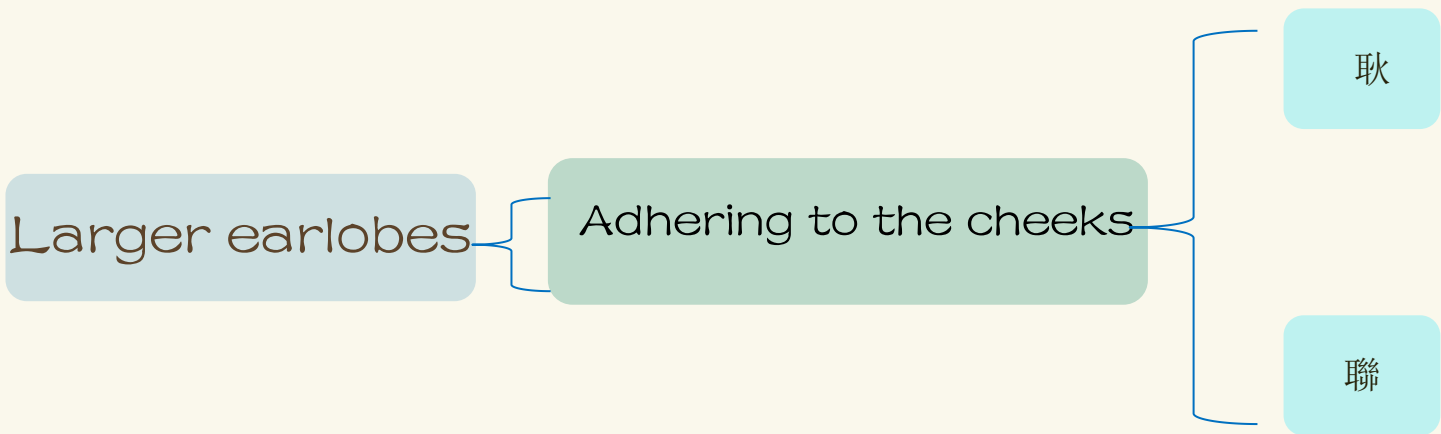
‘Ear... thick, firm and long all indicate longevity.’

- long and thick earlobes have been considered auspicious since ancient times

III . I Shape of the ear

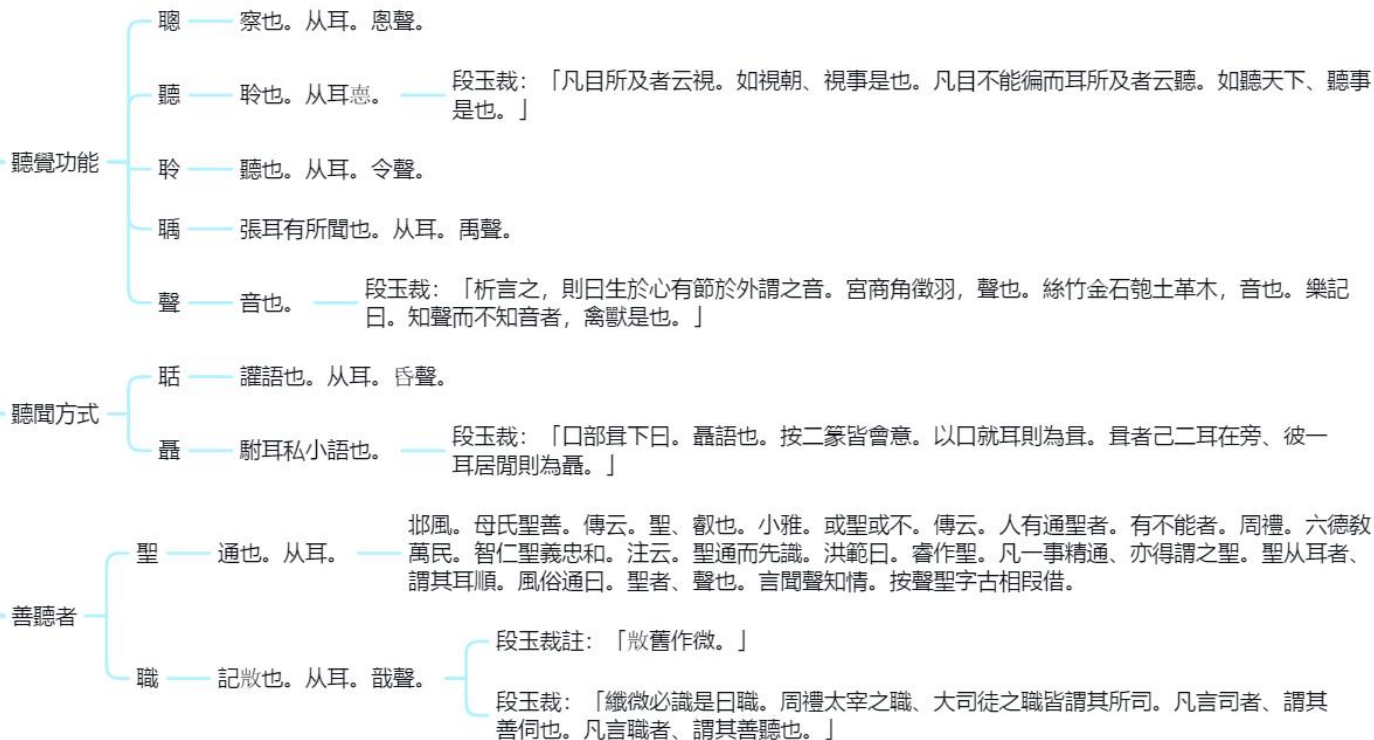


III . I Shape of the ear



III . II . Hearing

聽覺



III . II . Hearing

聽覺

善聽者

聖 — 通也。从耳。

擲風。母氏聖善。傳云。聖、叡也。小雅。或聖或不。傳云。人有通聖者。有不能者。周禮。六德敘萬民。智仁聖義忠和。注云。聖通而先識。洪範曰。睿作聖。凡一事精通、亦得謂之聖。聖从耳者、謂其耳順。風俗通曰。聖者、聲也。言聞聲知情。按聲聖字古相假借。

職 — 記敝也。从耳。戠聲。

段玉裁註：「敝舊作微。」

段玉裁：「纖微必識是曰職。周禮太宰之職、大司徒之職皆謂其所司。凡言司者、謂其善伺也。凡言職者、謂其善聽也。」

聽覺障礙

聽不見

聾 — 無聞也。从耳。龍聲。

聵 — 生而聾曰聵。

聵 — 益梁之州謂聾為聵。秦晉聽而不聰、聞而不達謂之聵。从耳。辛聲。

聵 — 聾也。从耳。貴聲。

聵 — 無知意也。从耳。出聲。

聽得見

聊 — 耳鳴也。

段玉裁：「楚辭曰：『耳聊啾而惶惶。』王注云：『聊啾，耳鳴也。』此聊之本義。故字从耳。」

無耳

聵 — 吳楚之外凡無耳者謂之聵。言若斷耳為聵。

段玉裁：「斷耳即墮耳。聵當作明。」

有耳

聵 — 安也。

段玉裁：「二耳之在人首。帖妥之至者也。凡帖妥當作此字。帖其段借字也。」

III . II . I Hearing

- 聽 is hearing.
- Duan Yucai commented,
‘When the eyes cannot cover everything, what the ears can perceive is called listening.’

聰

察也

聆

聽也

聦

張耳有所聞也

III . II . I Hearing



‘聲’ is defined as sound

Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi and Yu are 聲

sounds produced by silk, bamboo,
metal, clay, leather and wood are all 音

III . II . II The way of listening

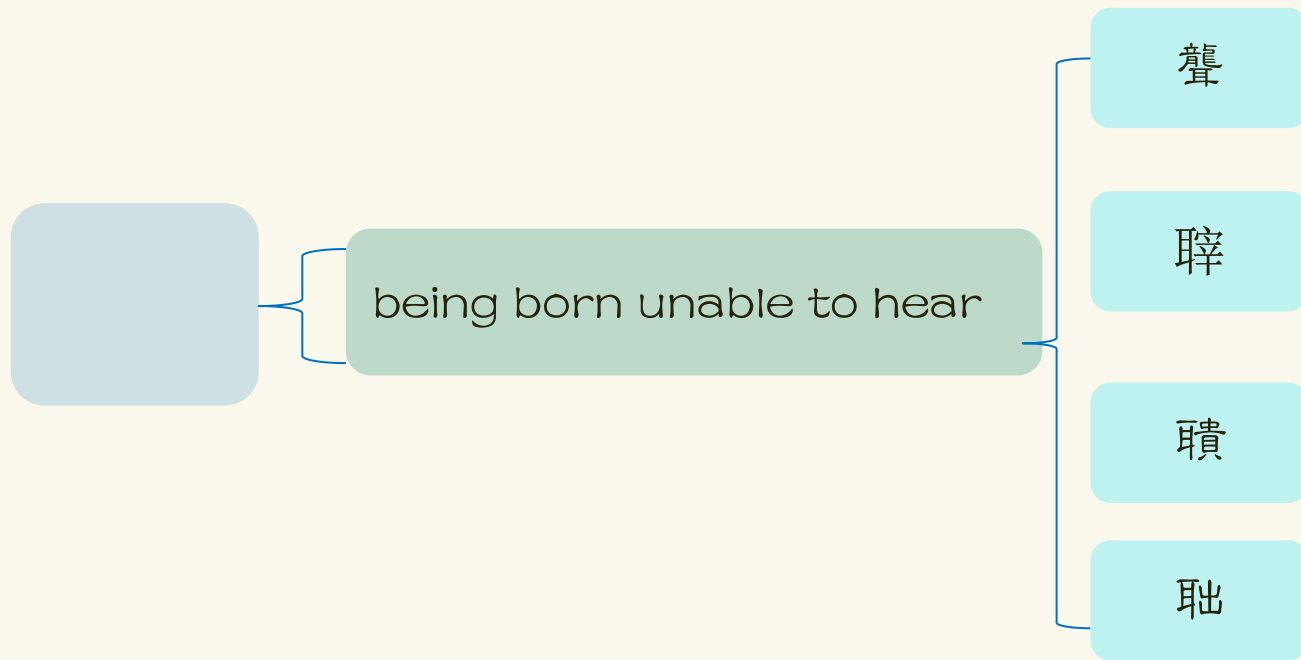
聾

‘to speak close to the ear.’ 「駙耳私小語也」

聒

‘to speak loudly’ 「謹語也」

III . II . III Auditory impairment



III . II . III Auditory impairment



Individuals without ears in the
outskirts of Wu and Chu regions

III . II . IV A good listener

聖

‘to be proficient.’ 「通也」

聖 understand matters
through what they hear
「言聞聲知情也。」

職

‘to record small matters’
「記也」

III . III Visting

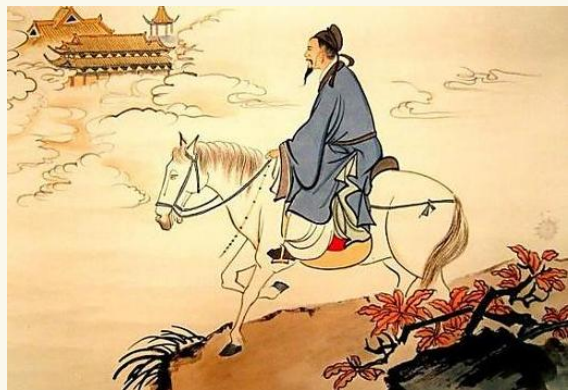
出門拜訪

聘 — 訪也

聞 — 知聲也。 — 段玉裁注：「引申之為令聞廣譽。」

靡 — 乘輿金耳也。 — 从耳。麻聲。讀若泚水。

III . III Visiting



聞

‘hearing someone’ s reputation.’
段注：「引伸為之令聞廣譽」

聘

‘visiting.’ 「訪也」

‘to adorn a horse’ s ears with
gold’ 「乘輿金耳也。」

III . IV Military Discipline

軍事刑罰

𦏧 — 軍法呂矢母耳也。从耳矢。

𦏧 — 軍戰斷耳也。春秋傳曰。呂為俘𦏧。从耳。或聲。

𦏧 — 𦏧耳也。

III . IV Military Discipline



聃



to cut off the enemy's ears.
「軍戰耳也」

聃



arrows piercing through the ears
「軍法呂矢毋耳也」

聃



Ears have fallen off 「墮耳也」

IV

Conclusion

Conclusion

- The various character including 耳 radical in ancient time were predominantly used to describe aspects related to the shape of ear and its auditory functions.
 - a) Regarding ear shape, large earlobes were considered an auspicious trait.
 - b) Concerning auditory perception, it is known that ancient people placed great importance on hearing, as sages, by listening to sounds, could fully discern the emotions of others.
 - c) Finally, through characters such as 職 and 聘, we gain insights into aspects of ancient customs regarding visiting guests and military punishments.

Conclusion

- Thus, by organizing the original meaning of the character 耳 and its various meanings within its radicals, we deepen our understanding of how ancient people perceived the significance of the ear.

Thank you for listening