

**The Wonderland of
Chinese
Characters
and Classical Chinese Poetry**

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The **goal of today's lecture**

is to find tips for analyzing

**the structure of Chinese
Characters**

and to enjoy reading

the Classical Chinese poems

My lecture includes:

- 1 Introduction of the poem
- 2 Discussion
- 3 **The basic structure of Chinese Characters**
- 4 Discussion
- 5 **Close reading of another poem**
- 6 Discussion

Following these steps, you will be able to enjoy the charm of Chinese Characters and the fascination of classical poems.



孤舟笠翁
釣於江雪

丁巳年
冬月
畫於
滬上

江雪 唐 柳宗元

千 山 鳥 飛 絕
萬 徑 人 蹤 滅
孤 舟 蓑 笠 翁
獨 釣 寒 江 雪

江雪 唐 柳宗元

千

thousand

山

mountain

鳥

a bird

飛

to fly

絕

to disappear

You can see no birds flying on thousands of mountains.

萬

million

徑

small path

人

people

蹤

foot prints

滅

to vanish

You can see no foot prints on millions of small paths.

孤

舟

蓑

笠

翁

solitude a small boat a straw cape a bamboo hat an old man

There is an old man with a straw rain cape on his shoulder and a bamboo hat on his head in a small boat by himself.

獨

釣

寒

江

雪

alone

to fish

cold

a river

snow

He is fishing alone on a cold river covered by snow.



孤舟笠翁
釣於江雪

丁巳年
冬月
畫於
滬上



Now let's take a look at
the structure
of
Chinese Characters

Four Basic Types of the Chinese Characters Structure

1 **Concrete Pictograph** such as



2 **Abstract Pictograph** such as



3 **Compound Pictograph** such as



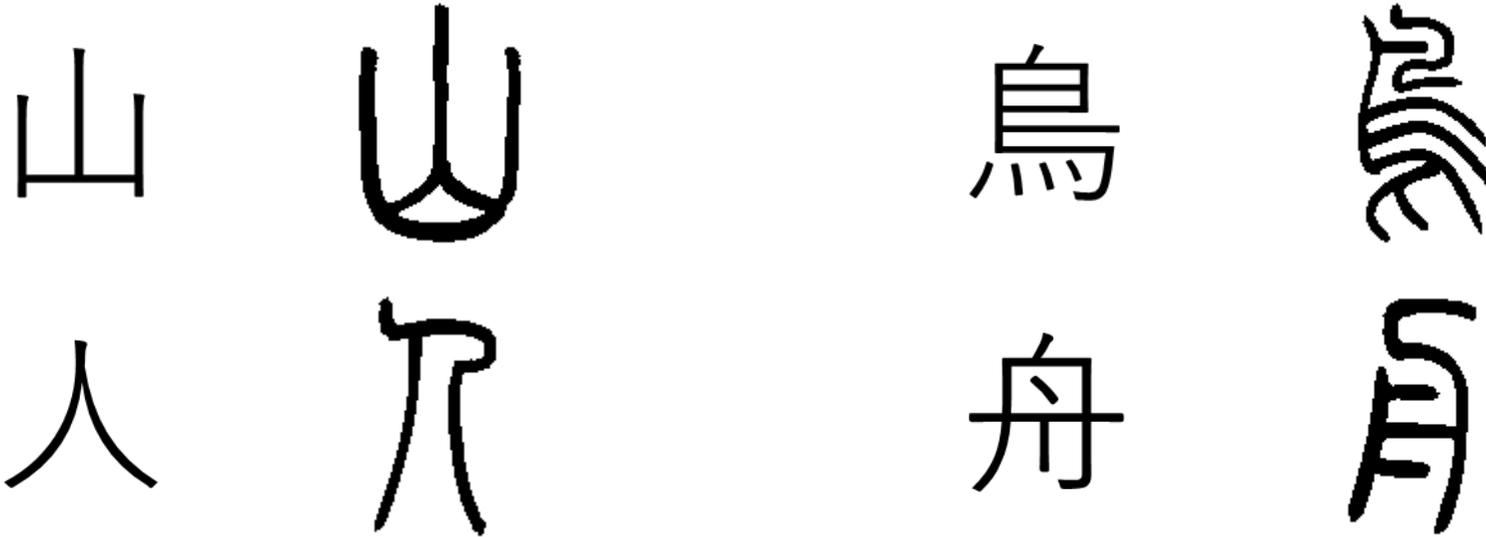
4 **Combination of a semantic and a phonetic element**

such as



1 Concrete Pictograph

Concrete pictographs are symbolic characters which represent **something concrete**, such as 'mountain', 'bird' and so on.



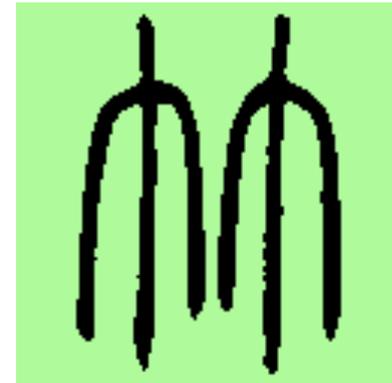
Guess what these pictographs stand for !



日



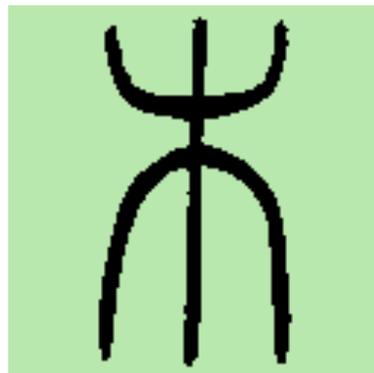
月



竹



羽



木



水

2 Abstract Pictograph

Abstract pictographs are symbolic characters which represent **concept / notion** such as 'up', 'down' and so on.

上

An abstract pictograph for 'up' consisting of a short horizontal line at the top and a curved line below it that starts under the left end of the top line and ends under the right end, curving upwards.

下

An abstract pictograph for 'down' consisting of a curved line at the top that starts high on the left and ends lower on the right, curving downwards.

本

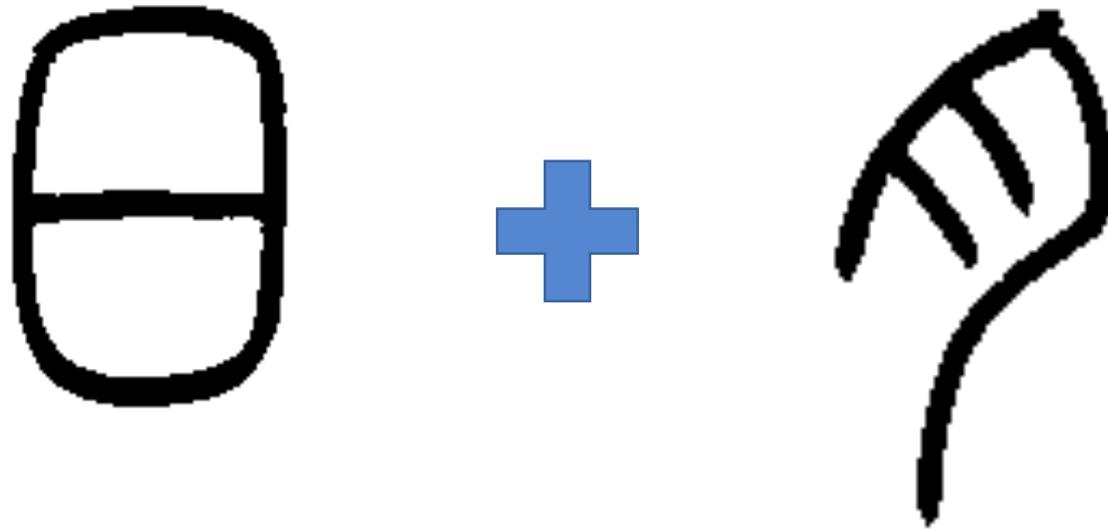
An abstract pictograph for 'tree' consisting of a vertical line with a horizontal line across its middle and two curved lines extending upwards from the top of the vertical line.

末

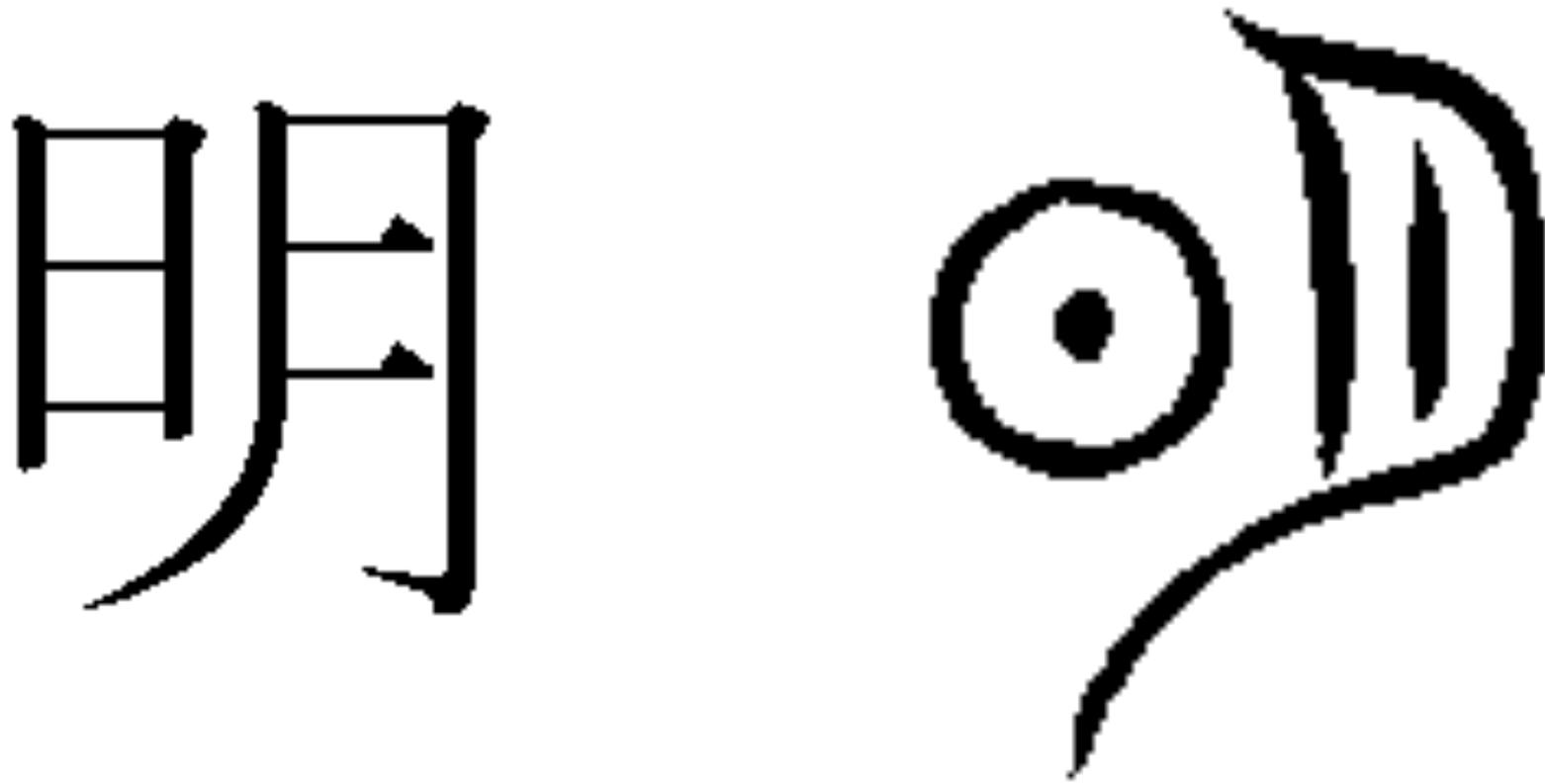
An abstract pictograph for 'tree' consisting of a vertical line with a horizontal line across its middle and two curved lines extending upwards from the top of the vertical line.

3 Compound Pictograph

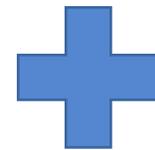
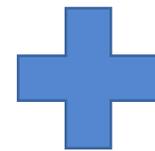
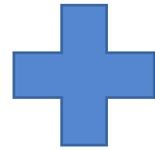
The compound pictographs are the complicated characters **consisted of several pictographs.**



An example of a Compound Pictograph



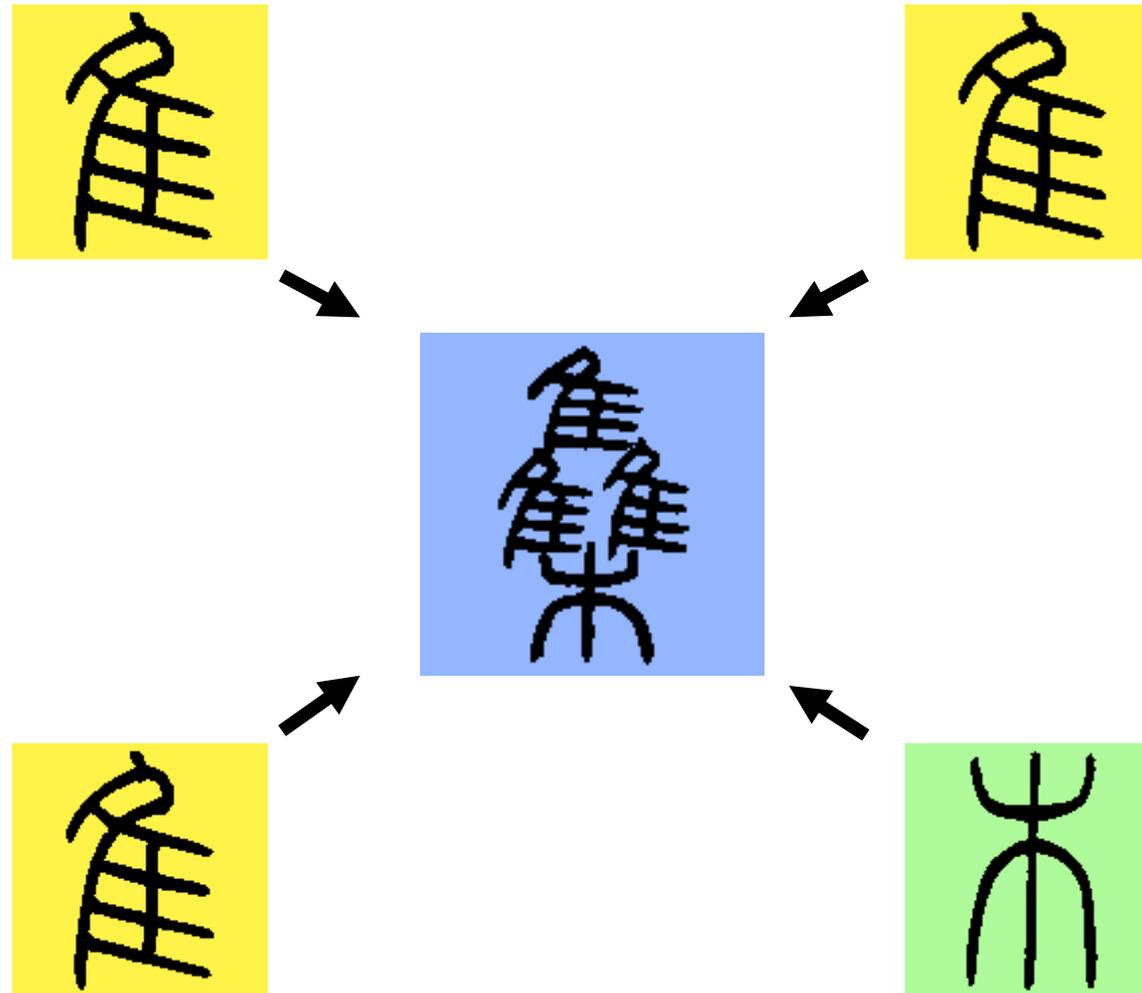
Another example of a Compound Pictograph



Another example of a Compound Pictograph



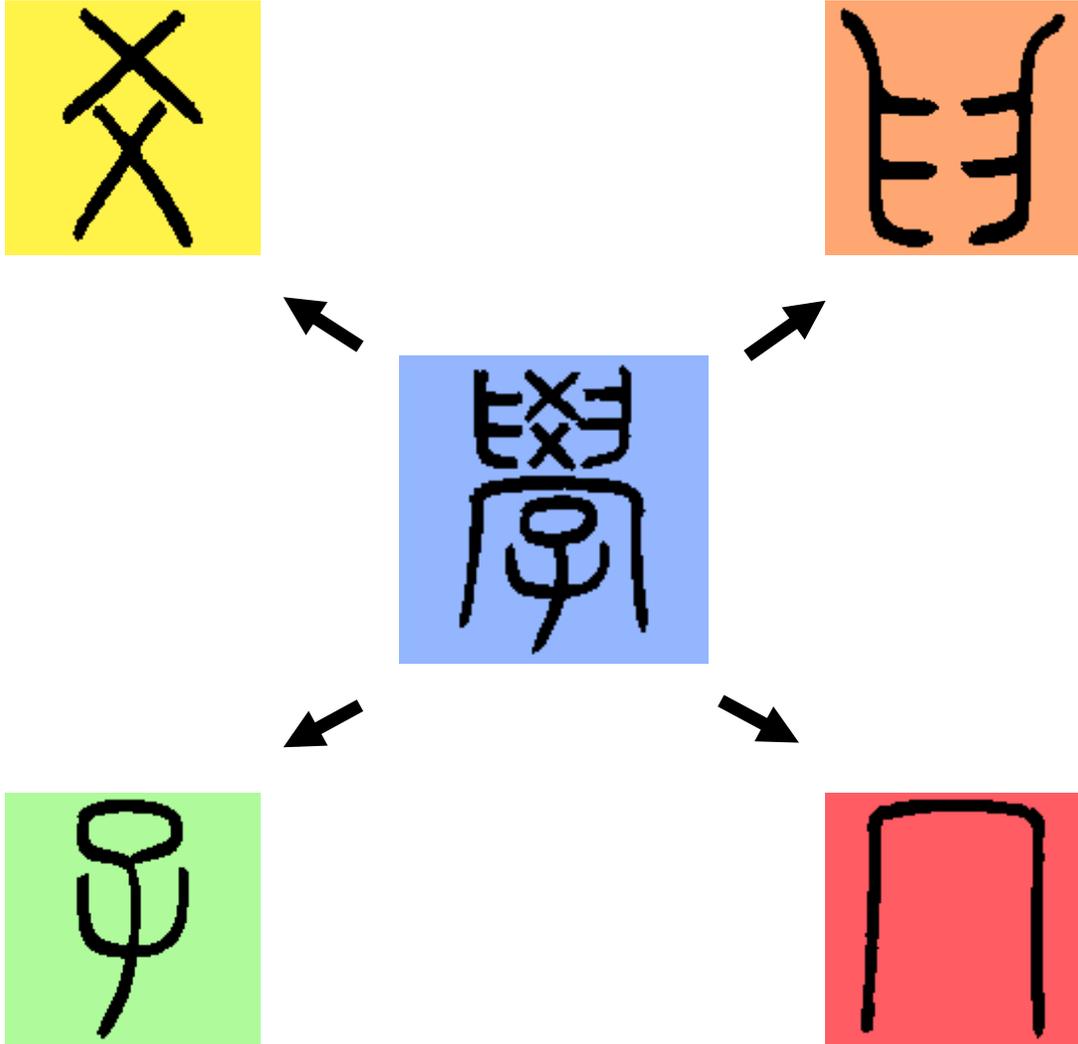
The idea of making a compound



The transition of the style and the form



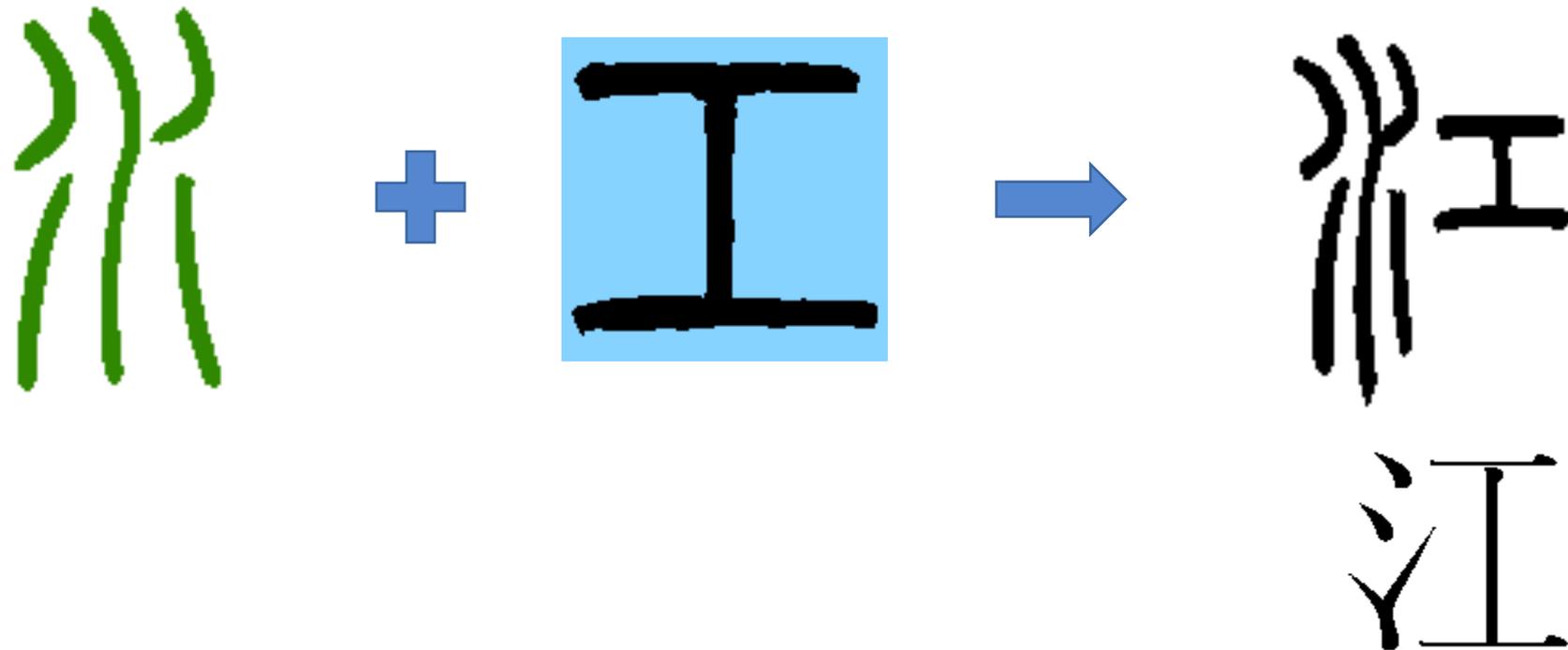
The decomposition of a compounded character



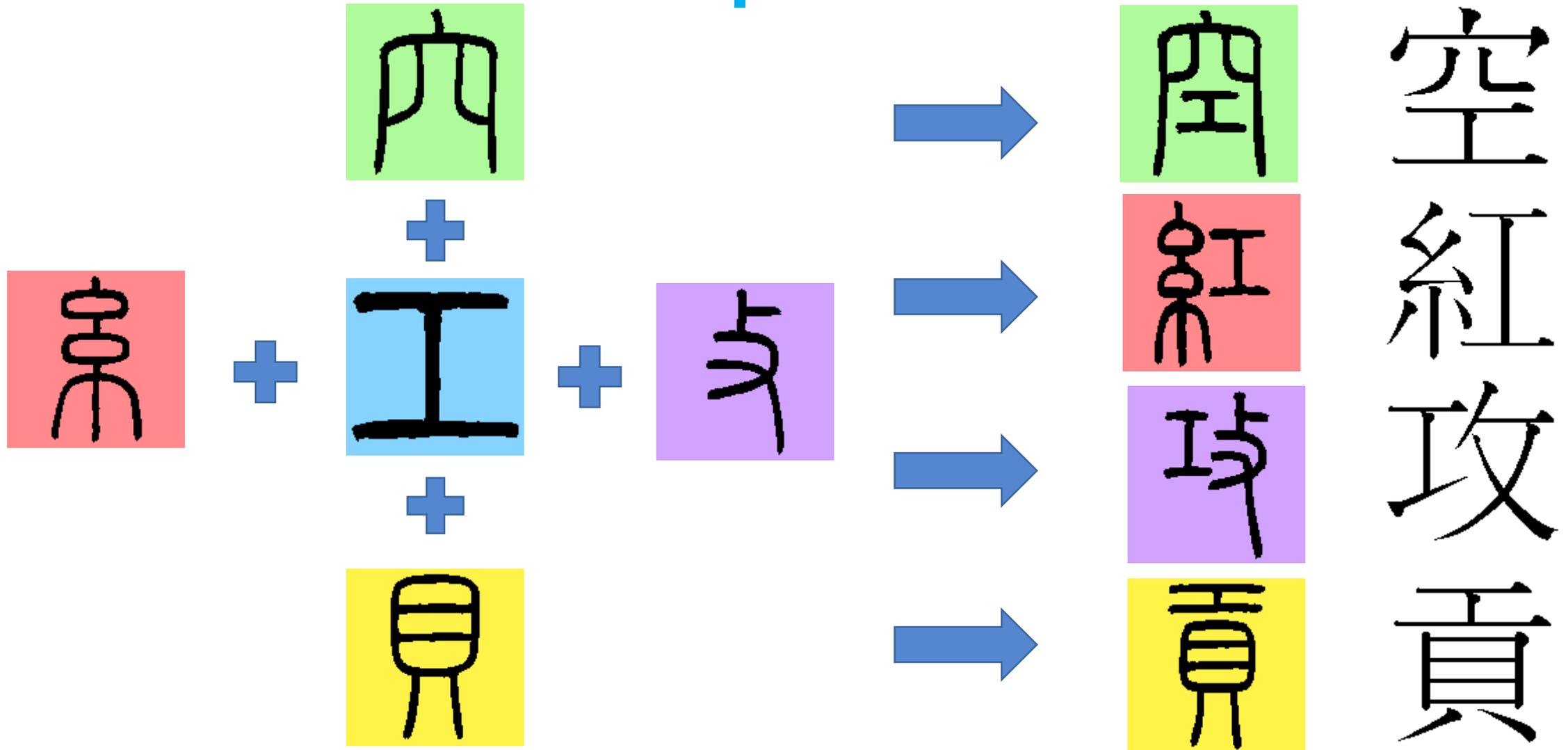
The transition of the style and the form



4 Combination of a semantic element and a phonetic element



4 Combination of a semantic element and a phonetic element



4 Combination of a semantic element and a phonetic element



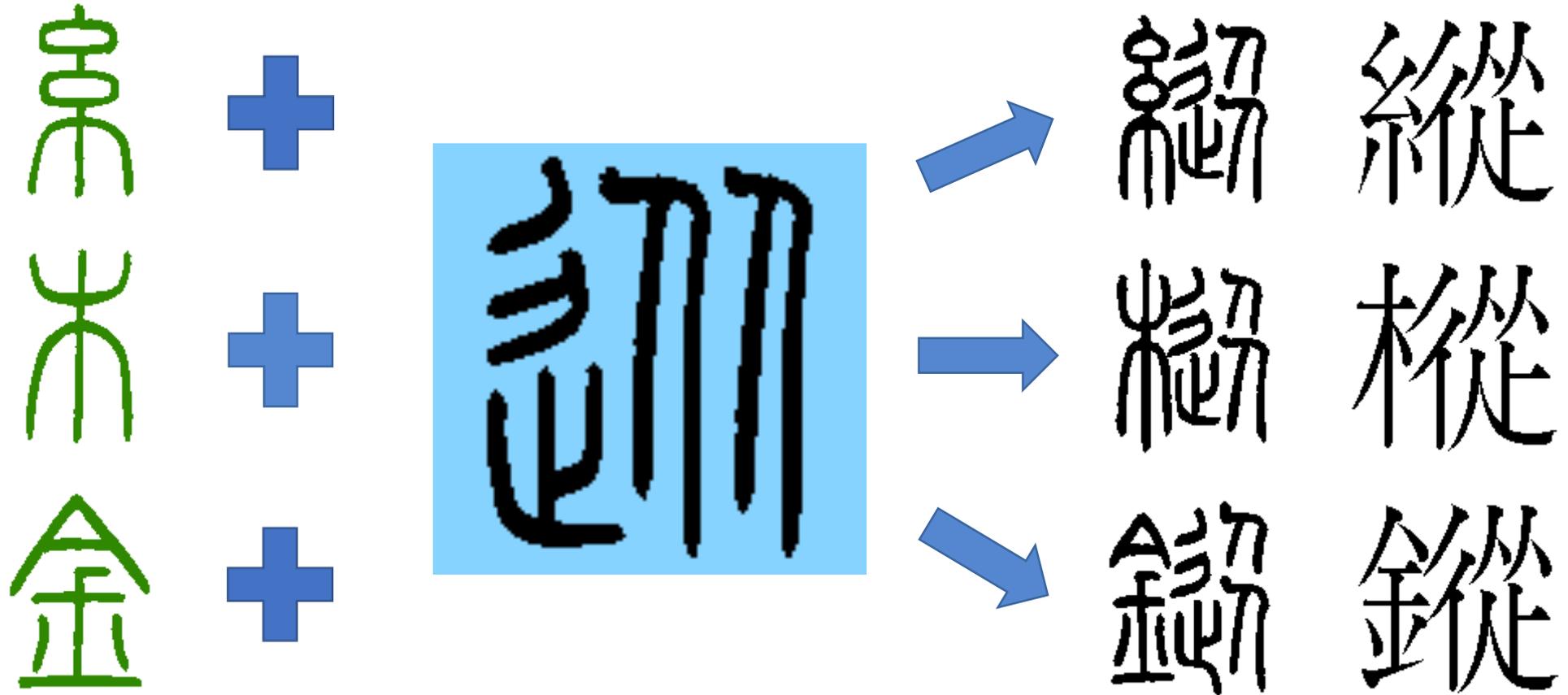
+



follow

蹤

4 Combination of a semantic element and a phonetic element



4 Combination of a semantic element and a phonetic element

Combination of a semantic element and a phonetic element is the most **productive** structure of Chinese Characters. More than **80%** of Chinese Characters are of this type.

Quiz Can you figure out which of the four categories these characters belong to ?



a child



the sky



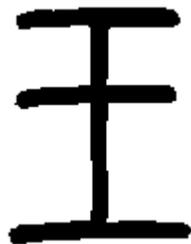
rain



paper



to fly



a king



to chirp



to wash

Answer 
Pictograph

Concrete

𠄎



子

飛

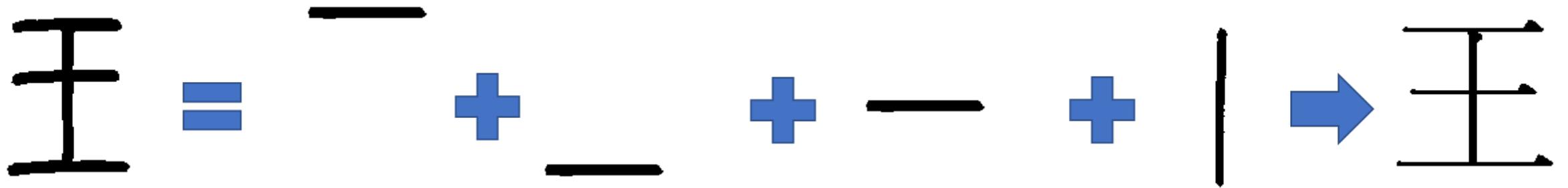


飛

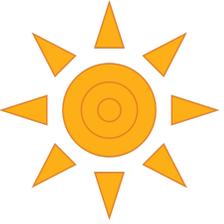
Answer Abstract Pictograph



A line on the top of a man stands for the sky.



The king governs the sky, the earth and the people.

Answer  Compound Pictograph

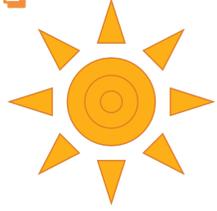
雨 = 一 + 几 + 水 → 雨

Raindrops are falling down from the sky through clouds.

鳴 = 口 + 鳥 → 鳴

A bird is singing a song opening its mouth.

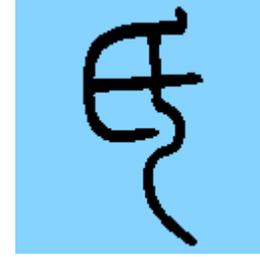
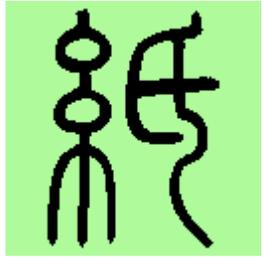
Answer
and



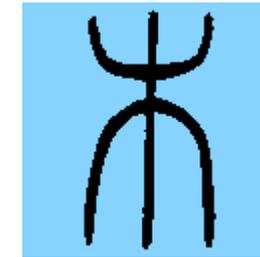
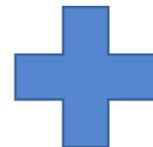
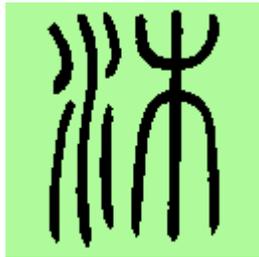
Combination of a semantic

a phonetic

element



cliff



tree

Summary

the structure of Chinese Characters

1 Concrete Pictograph



characters consist of
simple elements

2 Abstract Pictograph

3 Compound Pictograph



characters consist of
combined components

4 Combination of a semantic
and a phonetic element

Now let's review the poem
“JiangXue”

“The Cold River with Snow”

江雪 唐 柳宗元

千 山 鳥 飛 絕
萬 徑 人 蹤 滅
孤 舟 蓑 笠 翁
獨 釣 寒 江 雪

Discuss **your impression**

about

Chinese Characters **after** you

learned about **the structure.**

Conclusion

Chinese Characters are made of **a unity of simple components**.

The most primitive components are **pictorial ideograms**, which are two types of pictograph; concrete and abstract.

The **compound and combination** of several pictographs produce new characters, which are **meaning oriented** and **sound oriented**.

After you recognize the system of Chinese Characters, you are at the entrance to the world of classical Chinese Linguistics!



Next let's advance to focusing
both on the structure
and on the sound
of Chinese Characters.



How many of you are familiar with the story of two stars- the Weaving Girl and the Cowherd Boy?

Share the story with your partners.

Now that all of you share the story, let us read an Old Poem of Han Dynasty.

“The Old Poem” is based on a myth. — The Romance of the Two Stars—

According to a Chinese myth,
the Herd Boy and the Weaving Maid were originally a couple.

But after their marriage, they became lazy in their work.

Therefore they were separated as a punishment.

Even though, they were allowed to unite once a year
on the seventh night of the seventh lunar month,
when magpies build a bridge over the Milky Way
for them to meet each other.

漢 古詩十九首
Han Dynasty Old Style Poems

迢迢牽牛星、皎皎河漢女。

纖纖擢素手、札札弄機杼。

終日不成章、泣涕零如雨。

河漢清且淺、相去復幾許。

盈盈一水間、脈脈不得語。



牛 迢 星 迢 牽

remote to pull a cow a star
the Star Altair (the Herd Boy)

漢 皎 女 皎 河

white and bright the Milky Way a woman
the Star Vega (the Weaving Maid)

The Herd Boy and The Weaving Maid are separated
by the white and bright Milky Way, remote from each

纖
素

delicate

手

to stretch out of sleeves

纖

white

擢

hands

札
機

click-cluck
(sound of weaving)

杼

to work with

札

a loom

弄

a shuttle

The Weaving Maid stretches her delicate white hands out of sleeves , working with a loom and a shuttle, and there is the sound of weaving.

終	日	不	成
章			
end	day	not	to complete
		pattern	

泣	涕	零	如
雨			
to cry	tears	to fall	as if
		rain	

The Weaving Made is not be able to complete patterns even at the end of the day thinking about the Herd Boy, and she falls tears as if it is raining.

河
淺

the Milky Way

漢

clear

清

and

且

shallow

相
幾

each other apart

許

again

去

how much

復

As the Milky Way is clear and shallow, it seems easy to go across the river. I wonder how long we apart from each other again.

盈

a full of

盈

a

一

river

水

to separate

間

脈

to gaze affectionately

脈

not

不

be able to

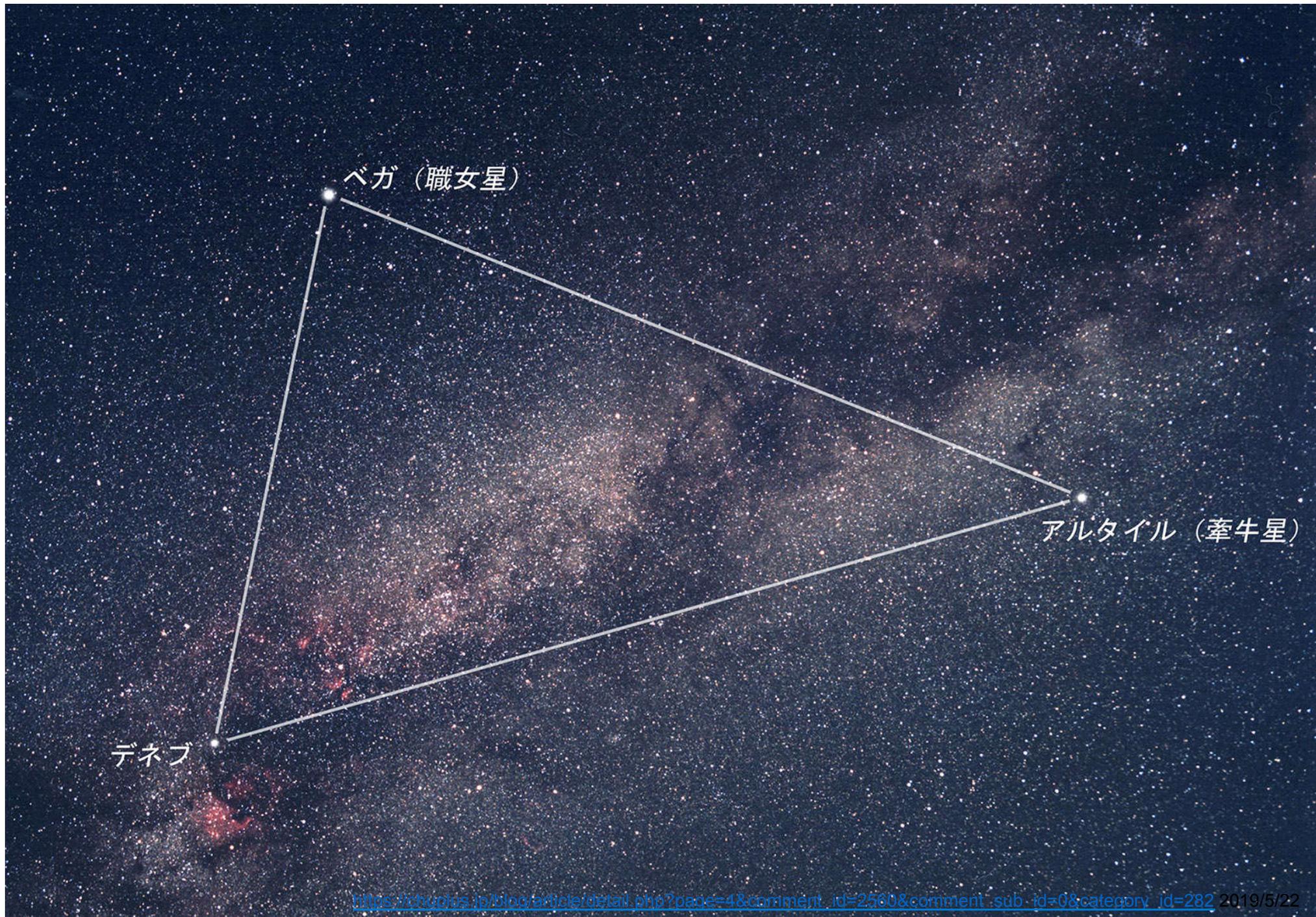
得

to talk

語

As a river full of water separate the Herd boy and the Weaving Made, the Weaving Made is not able to talk with him, only she can do is to gaze her lover far across the Milky Way.

Far and far is the Cowherd Star,
bright so bright is the Weaving Star.
Slender and white, her hands are moving
click-cluck shuttling over the loom.
She doesn't finish one piece in a day,
and her tears spin down as rain.
The Celestial River is clear and shallow;
there is no distance between the two.
Across the brimming water
the Weaver gazes with silent love.



ベガ (職女星)

アルタイル (牽牛星)

デネブ

Find Chinese Characters

**which have a similar
structure!**

漢 古詩十九首
Han Dynasty Old Style Poems

迢迢牽牛星、皎皎河漢女。

纖纖擢素手、札札弄機杼。

終日不成章、泣涕零如雨。

河漢清且淺、相去復幾許。

盈盈一水間、脈脈不得語。

What kind of element do these characters have in common ?

河 漢 泣 涕 清

河 漢 泣 涕 清 漢



**These Characters have something
to do
with **water**. (a river, the name of a
river,
to cry, tears, clean, shallow)**

What do you call this type of combination of same characters?

迢迢

皎皎

纖纖

札札

盈盈

脈脈

Reduplication

迢迢

皎皎

纖纖

札札

盈盈

脈脈

Onomatopoeia 🖐️ Listen to the pronunciation!

tiao2tiao2

迢迢

jiao3jiao3

皎皎

xian1xian1

纖

zha2zha2

咄咄

ying2ying2

纖

叮叮

mo4mo4

哧

Now let's talk about **the pronunciation!**

The pronunciation of Chinese Characters is **monosyllable**, which consists of [a consonant] , (a) vowel(s) and a **tone**.

There are **four types of tones** in Chinese; ma1, ma2, ma3, ma4, each of which expresses different meaning.

e.g.	媽	ma1	mother	烏	wu1	a crow
	麻	ma2	linen	吾	wu2	I
	馬	ma3	a horse	舞	wu3	to dance
	罵	ma4	to get angry	誤	wu4	to misunderstand

Lastly let's check the rhyme.

Listen carefully
how the red characters,
reduplication,
monosyllabic rhythm and
melodious four tones sound!

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Han Dynasty Old Style Poems

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Discuss **your impression**
about
Chinese Characters
after you learned about
the structure and
the sound.

Summary

**The tips for analyzing
the Chinese Characters structure
is to understand the four categories of its
structure.**

**The tips for enjoying
the Classical Chinese poems
is to get familiar with the sound system of
Chinese Characters.**

Conclusion

**The logical analysis of Chinese Characters
and
the sensible comprehension of Chinese
poetry
are
both effective and dispensable ways
to be
well acquainted with Chinese classics.**

THANK

YOU!

