



Tracing Gender in Chinese Script: A Diachronic Semiotic Analysis from Oracle Bone Inscriptions to Modern Characters

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Abstract:

Writing systems can be understood as windows into both language and the cultural worlds they encode. Chinese script, in particular, has long attracted scholarly attention for its distinctive logographic structure and deep historical continuity. By treating the script as an ideological carrier rather than a neutral vehicle of language, this paper investigates how gendered concepts are encoded, structured, and transmitted through Chinese character formation, word formation, and semantic compounding. The paper analyzes how notions of femininity and masculinity were visually and conceptually constructed in the earliest stages of

the Chinese writing system through a close examination of selected characters and semantic patterns. The study endeavors to demonstrate that gender in Chinese characters is not merely lexical but semiotically embedded, illuminating how the writing system functions as a bearer of cultural and ideological practices. The findings contribute to interdisciplinary discussions in semiotics, linguistics, and gender studies by highlighting the script's role in shaping and sustaining conceptualizations of gender from antiquity to the present.

Key words: *Gender, characters, semantics, script, ideology*