

206. 苍 [蒼] *cāng*, Deep Green or Blue

Equivalents

indigo; deep green or blue;
common folk



Significs and Stroke Counts

simplified ⁺⁺ 3 + 4; complex ⁺⁺ (艸) 3 (6) + 10

Character Composition

Signific-phonetic compound.

On the top is the signific component 艸 (⁺⁺) *cǎo*. On the bottom is the phonetic component 倉 *cāng*.

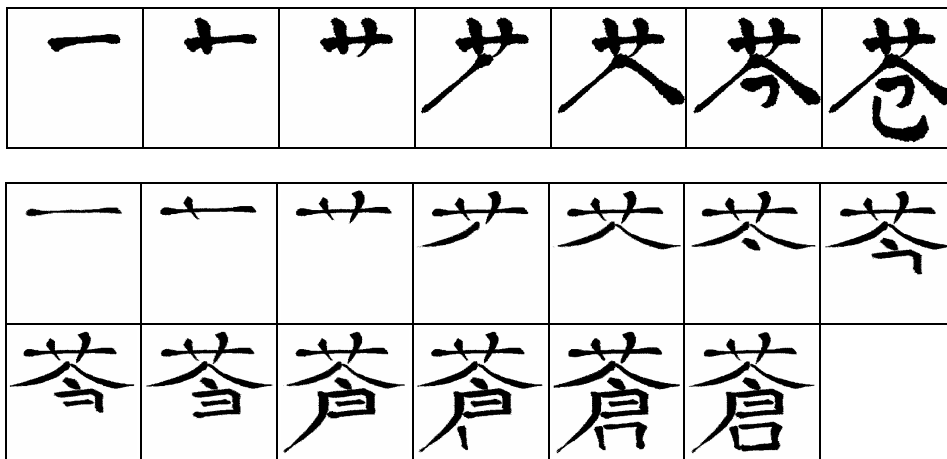
Explanation

A reading of the *Shuō Wén* suggests that the original meaning of 蒼 *cāng* was the color of wild grass. In time, it was used for the color of dark blue or indigo. Subsequently it came to mean dark green, and was also used to mean the color gray. Metonymically, it refers to the grass itself. Given the prevalence of grass, it further gained the metaphorical meaning of “common people.”

Combinations

苍耳子 蒼耳子 *cāng ěr zǐ* xanthium (*Xanthii Fructus*)
 苍朮 蒼朮 *cāng zhú* atractylodes (*Atractylodis Rhizoma*)
 苍白 蒼白 *cāng bái* somber white (of the complexion)

Stroke Sequence



一	十	艹	艸	艾	芥	苍	苍	苍
一	十	艹	艸	艾	芥	苍	苍	苍
一	十	艹	艸	艾	芥	苍	苍	苍

207. 草 [草] *cǎo*, Grass, Herb

Equivalents

grass, herb; common; uncultured

Significs and Stroke Counts

simplified 艹 3 + 6; complex 艹 (艸) 3 (6) + 6



Character Composition

Signific-phonetic compound.

On the top is the signific component 艸 (艹) *cǎo*. On the bottom is the phonetic component 早 *zǎo*.

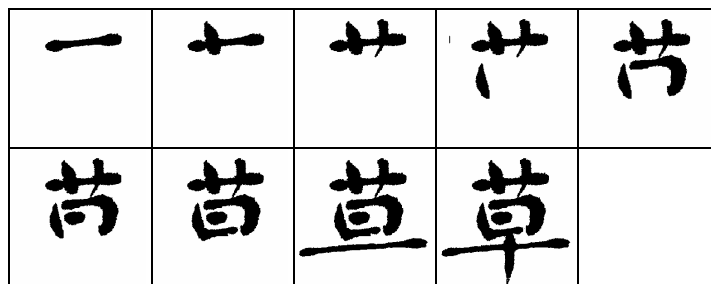
Explanation

The ancient form of 草 *cǎo* was 艸 (艹) *cǎo*. In the *Shuō Wén*, 草 and 艸 were listed as two separate words. The character 草 meant “acorn,” the fruit of oak tree, whereas 艸 *cǎo*. was the generic term for herbaceous plants. However, 草 often appears in ancient texts instead of 艸 (艹), and it eventually became the standard form. With the innovation of the clerical style, 艸 *cǎo* was transformed into 艹 *cǎo*. This became the standard form of the grass signific, but it was not used as an independent character. From the original meaning of “grass”, 草 connotes the notion of “low quality,” “hasty,” “common,” “uncultured,” or “unlearned”; e.g., 草案 *cǎo àn*, “draft,” 草鄙 *cǎo bǐ*, “unlearned,” “uncultured,” 草民 *cǎo mǐn*, “common people.”

Combinations

甘草	甘草	<i>gān cǎo</i>	licorice (Glycyrrhizae Radix)
夏枯草	夏枯草	<i>xià kū cǎo</i>	prunella (Prunellae Spica)
草豆蔻	草豆蔻	<i>cǎo dòu kòu</i>	Katsumada's galangal seed (Alpiniae Katsumadai Semen)
草药	草藥	<i>cǎo yào</i>	herbal medicines

Stroke Sequence



208. 柴 [柴] *chái*, Firewood

Equivalents

firewood; thin, tough; valueless

Significs and Stroke Counts

simplified 木 4 + 6; complex 木 4 + 6



Character Composition

Signific-phonetic compound.

On the top is the phonetic component 此 *cǐ*. On the bottom is the signific component 木 *mù*, wood.

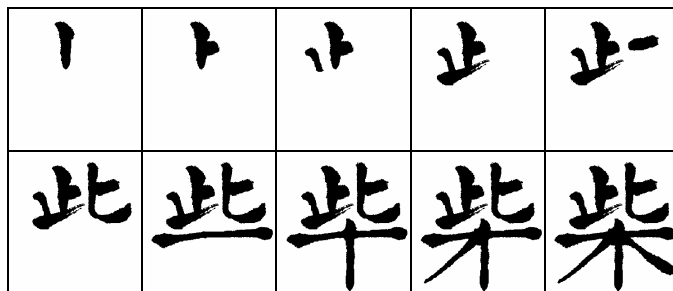
Explanation

In the *Shuō Wén* the original meaning of 柴 *chái* was “firewood.” Its meaning also extended to denote valueless things. It is also used in the sense of “thin,” “lean” or “tough,” e.g.: 枯瘦如柴 *kū shòu rú chāi*, “worn to a shadow,” 火柴 *huǒ chái*, “match.”

Combinations

柴胡 柴胡 *chái hú* bupleurum (Bupleuri Radix)
火柴 火柴 *huǒ chái* match (used for lighting fires)

Stroke Sequence



209. 陈 [陳] *chén*, Old**Equivalents**

old

Significs and Stroke Counts

simplified 阝 2 + 5; complex 阝 (阜) 2 (8) + 8

陈	陳
---	---

Character Composition

Signific-phonetic compound.

In small seal script, on the left is the signific component 阜 (阝) *fù*, hill. On the right is the signific component 木 *mù*, wood, joined with the phonetic component 申 *shēn*. The bronze inscription of 陳 *chén* has an extra component 土 *tǔ* on the bottom.

Explanation

The original meaning of 陳 *chén* was “to display.” Objects on display usually have preservation value. Hence it came to mean “old.” The character 陳 *chén* was also used as an ancient Chinese military term, “array.” When used in this sense, the pronunciation is *zhèn*. Later on, this meaning was replaced by 陣 *zhèn*. The character 陳 is also a Chinese surname.

Combination

陈皮 陳皮 *chén pí* tangerine peel (*Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium*)

Stroke Sequence

了	阝	阝	阝	阝	阝	陈
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

了	阝	阝	阝	阝	阝	阝	陣	陣	陳
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

了	冫	冫	阝	阝	阝	陈	陈	陈
了	冫	冫	阝	阝	阝	陈	陈	陈
了	冫	冫	阝	阝	阝	陈	陈	陈

210. 川 [川] *chuān*, Stream, Sìchuān**Equivalents**

river, stream; Sìchuān; plain

Significs and Stroke Counts

simplified 丿 1 + 2; complex 川 3 + 0

**Character Composition**

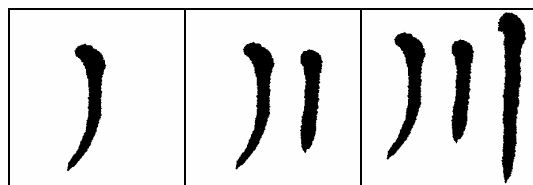
Pictograph.

The oracle bone script of 川 *chuān* depicts a winding river.**Explanation**

As depicted by the oracle bone script, 川 *chuān* originally meant what it still means today—river. This word is familiar to Westerners because it appears in the province name Sìchuān, “Four Rivers.” The written form of 川 took shape when clerical form was invented. The character 川 *chuān* also means “plain.”

Combinations

川贝母	川貝母	<i>chuān bèi mǔ</i>	Sichuan fritillaria (<i>Fritillariae Cirrhosae Bulbus</i>)
川芎	川芎	<i>chuān xiōng</i>	chuanxiong (<i>Chuanxiong Rhizoma</i>)
川连	川連	<i>chuan1 lian2</i>	Sìchuān coptis (<i>Coptidis Rhizoma Sichuanensis</i>)

Stroke Sequence

211. 丹〔丹〕 *dān* Cinnabar, Elixir

Equivalents

cinnabar; vermillion; elixir; pill, pellet, granule

Significs and Stroke Counts

simplified 丩 1 + 3; complex 丶 1 + 3



Character Composition

Ideograph.

The oracle bone form of 丹 *dān* depicts a mining shaft with cinnabar in the center.

Explanation

As suggested by the *Shuō Wén*, 丹 *dān* originally meant cinnabar. The natural reddish color of cinnabar lends 丹 *dān* the extended meaning of “red.” The ancient Chinese Daoists used cinnabar as the primary ingredient in their alchemical practices in search of eternal elixir; hence the character 丹 *dān* also means “elixir.” Amongst Daoists, elixir is also termed “medicine”; therefore, it was borrowed back into Chinese medical terminology. It refers to “pills,” “pellet” or “granules.”

Combinations

牡丹皮	牡丹皮	<i>mǔ dān pí</i>	moutan (Moutan Cortex)
火丹	火丹	<i>huǒ dān</i>	fire cinnabar (erysipelas)
丹参	丹参	<i>dān shēn</i>	salvia (Salviae Miltiorrhizae Radix)

Stroke Sequence

