



# China

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中国



# Chinese characters

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中国字













# *Culture China* on the screen of the Times Square

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[http://youtu.be/AIeSzxDE\\_NI](http://youtu.be/AIeSzxDE_NI)

pictogram

## The development of characters (thousands of years)

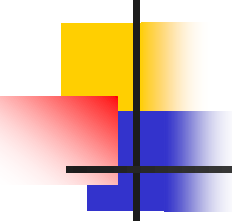
	魚	鳥	羊
甲骨文			
金文			
小篆			
隸書			
楷書			
草書			



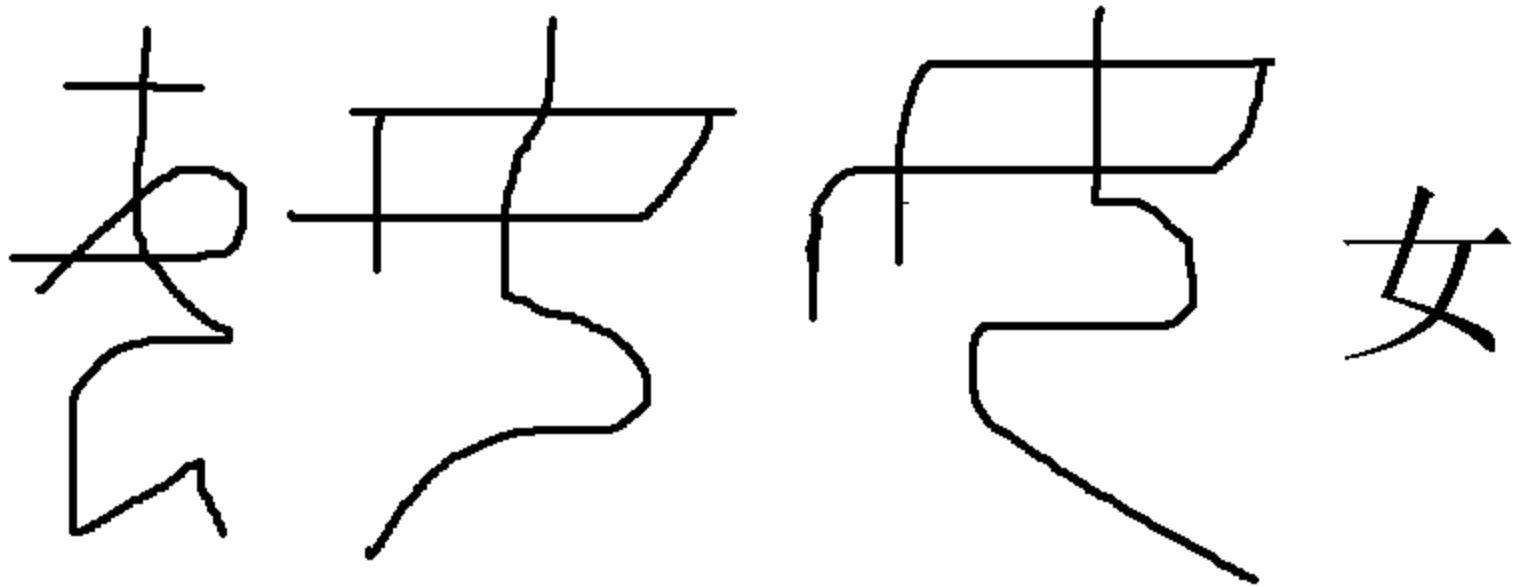
# The Development of Chinese Characters with 女 and Women's Status

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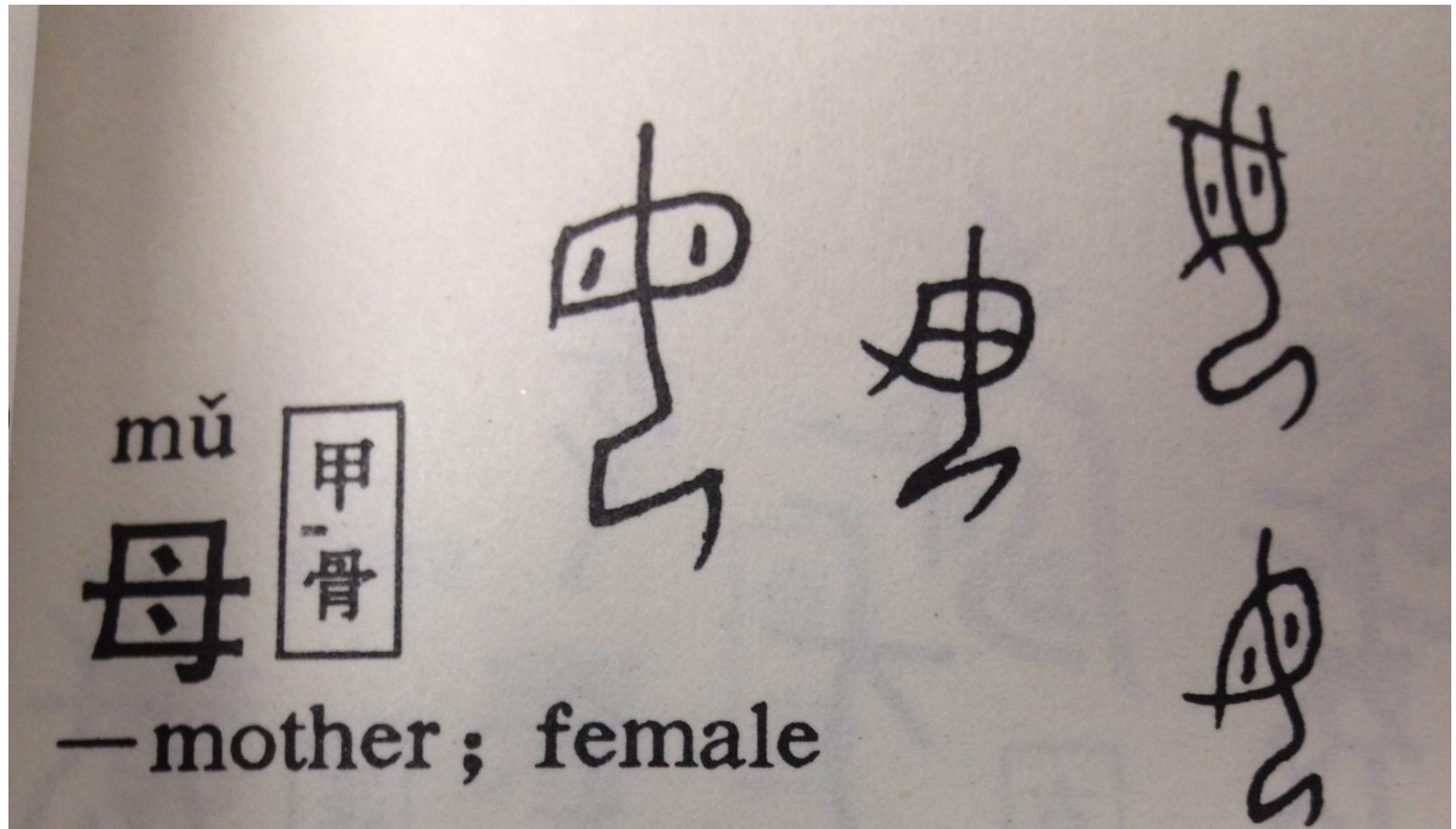
女字旁中国字的  
演变及女性地位



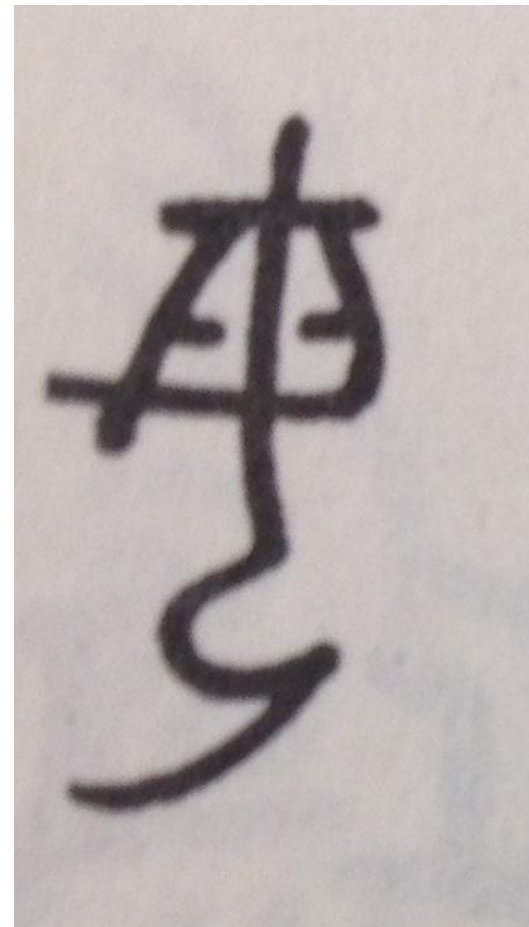
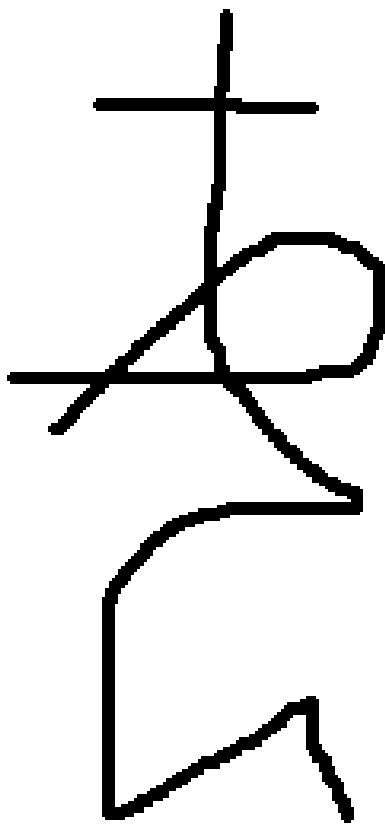
女: Woman (A modest woman  
squatting down with hands crossed  
in front of her body)



母: Mother/Female (Drawing of “Mother” during her breast-feeding period)

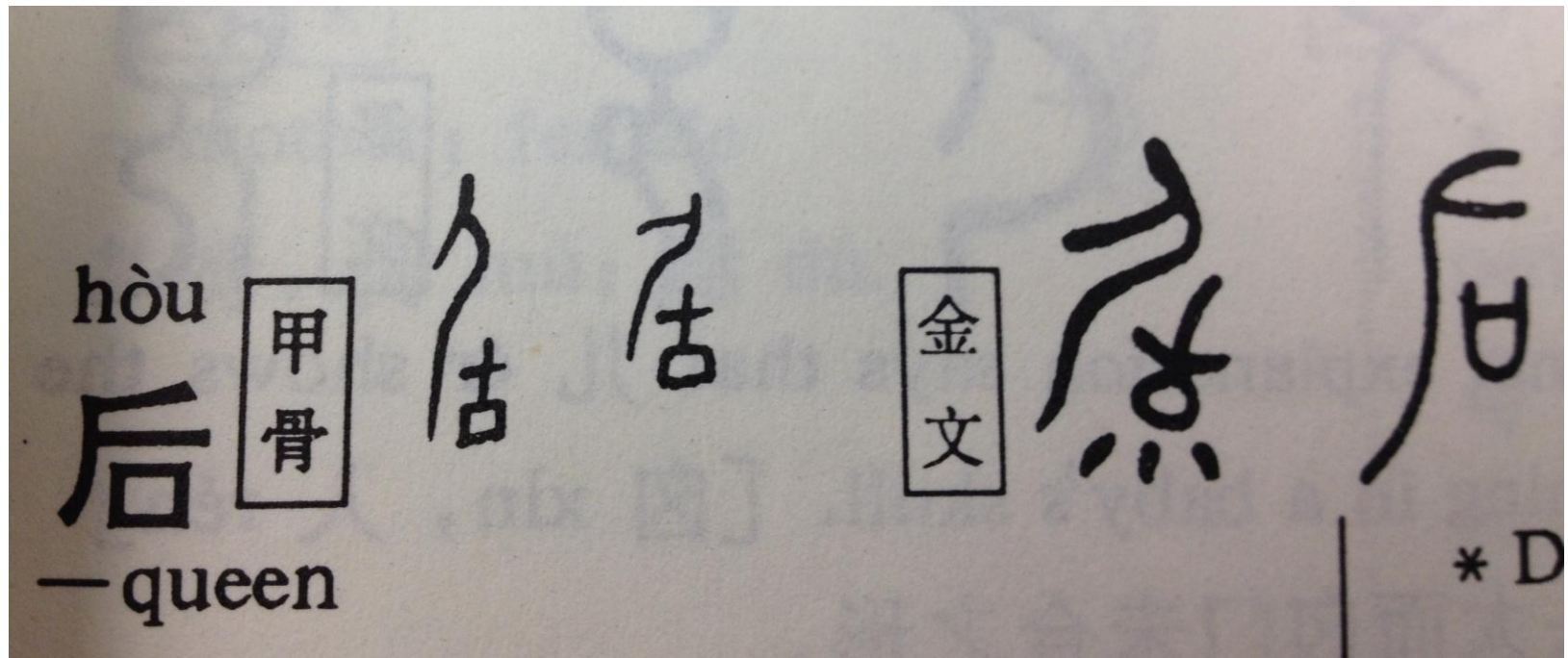


Two dots marking the breasts in the character 母 are the only differences that distinguish from the character 女





后: Queen (A woman capable of producing children)



# More than 700 characters with 女 as a part of a new character in *Chinese Dictionary*

Meaning of characters with 女		Number of characters		Percentage of total characters
Relationship in a family and society		107		11. 1
Marriage		40		4. 1
Family names		321		33. 5
Behaviors	Good	75	156	16. 2
	Bad	81		
Female beauty		265		26. 5



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# The Examples

(with the development of different  
Chinese social system)



# Matriarchal Society

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- The origin of life
- The family names
- The marriage status and child-bearing



# The origin of life

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- 姓: The family name (developed by tribal women)
- 媧: The mother of human being
- 始: The beginning of everything on the earth



# The family names (of most kings/queens in ancient China)

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- 姜: Queen Shennong
- 姬: Yellow Emperor, a legendary ruler
- 妘: descendants of God of Fire
- 姚: Xun Emperor
- 嬴: The First Emperor of united China
- 嫫/嫫/嫫/嫫/嫫/嫫: Queens/Goddess
- 妣-弋 (女 disappeared with times going)



# The marriage status and child-bearing

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- 婚: marriage
- 娶: marry
- 嫁: marry
- 妊娠: pregnant (near childbirth)
- 婷-孕: pregnant (period of being pregnant)
- 好: a woman bearing many children



# Patriarchal Society

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- Wicked conducts
- Inferiority
- The relationships of women in an extended family





# Wicked conducts

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- 妒: quarrel
- 姦: adultery
- 妒: jealous
- 妄: absurd
- 婬/妓/娼: prostitute
- 嫌: suspect/dislike



# Inferiority

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- 奴: slave
- 妾: concubine
- 委: to give oneself to another person (co-dependency)  
→ to commit oneself to (a cause)



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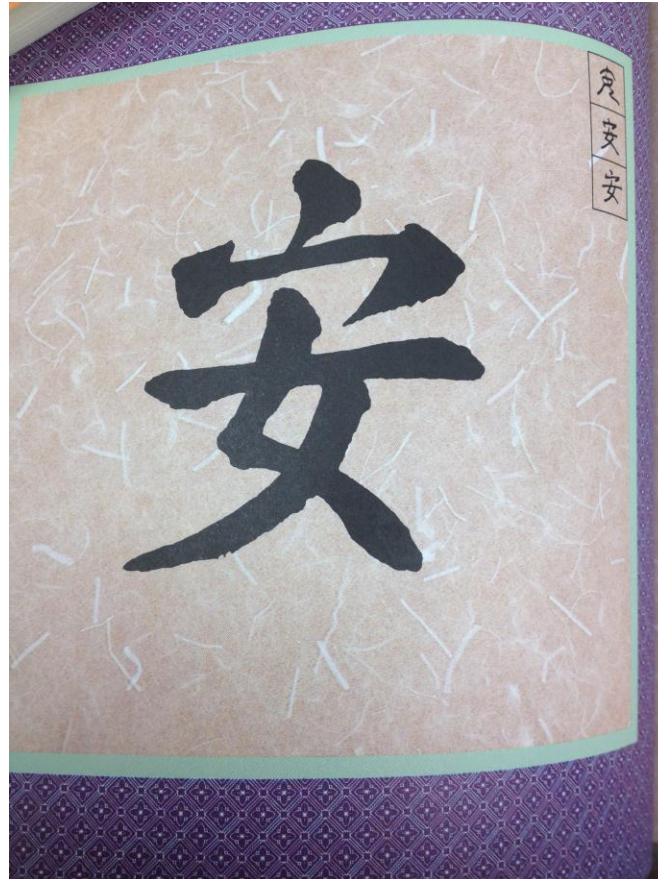
- 威：戍＋女

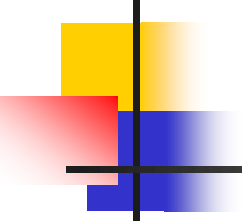
a weapon/power over a woman

- 妥：爪＋女

a paw/control over a woman

安: Tranquility (A woman in a house)





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The character for “tranquility” is rooted in the ancient Chinese tradition of male dominance. A “woman” under a man’s “roof” indicates that all is as it should be.

→ But it has a richer meaning, reflecting the parallel between microcosm and macrocosm. Just as a harmonious relationship between man and woman brings tranquility to the heart, peace comes when universal energies are in harmony.



# The relationships of women in an extended family

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- 姐/妹: sister
- 姑: aunt
- 嫂/妯/娍: sister-in-law
- 妣: the dead mother

# The up-and-down structure of a single character

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妻

妾

娶

委

妄

婪



# Modern times

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- The Revolution of 1911: the liberty of women (Baihuawen/Vernacular)
- The People's Republic of China in 1949: the equality of women (Simplified Characters)





# Evolution of neutral signs within characters

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倣-傲: arrogant (亻 → 人)

偷-偷: steal

嬾-懶: lazy


慢-慢: slow (忄 → 心)



# Liberty of women

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- 他: he/she/it before 1911
- 他女: 他 + 女 (He + Female: She)
- 她 first appeared in Mr. Liu Banrong's poem "How can't I miss her" in 1920, to replace 他. It caused heated arguments over the new character 她.



# Equality of women (The discussion on internet in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century)

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她