

## The Concept of *shěng* 省 in *Shuōwén jiězì*

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### Abstract

*In order to understand Xǔ Shèn's 許慎 contribution to the analysis of the Chinese writing system, it is important to clarify the terminology he uses in his Shuōwén jiězì 說文解字 (100 AD). In this paper I shall focus on the term shěng 省. Scholars who have studied the problem of shěng 省 in Shuōwén usually tried to reveal the mistakes either made by Xǔ Shèn or added later to the text, from different perspectives including the classification of the graphs in traditional liùshū approach, paleography, as well as phonological reconstructions.<sup>1</sup> Most of these authors may be right in their critical investigation of shěng 省, there are indeed many mistakes in Xǔ Shèn's graphic analysis, but none of them considered the problem as a whole or tried to understand what was the real reason for Xǔ Shèn to use this term. Shěng 省 is a rather complex term with different significations, such as omission, abbreviation, fusion, etc. I shall first clarify the meanings and uses of shěng in Shuōwén, before trying to understand why Xǔ Shèn needed this special term. We will see that despite many mistaken graphic analysis, already described by Chēn Shihuī 陳世輝 (1979), Qiú Xīguī 裘錫圭 (1988), and others, shěng 省 was an important tool for Xǔ Shèn's methodological approach to the Chinese writing system that also shows his deep knowledge of the evolution of the script.*

*Keywords : Shuōwén jiězì; shěng 省; abbreviated form; abbreviated constituent; graphic analysis*

## 1. Graphic analysis in *Shuōwén*

Xǔ Shèn introduces the term *shěng* 省 in his graphic analysis. The graphic analysis is the core system of Xǔ Shèn's interpretation of written words. It is based on a few formulae meant to clarify the nature and structural interaction of graphemes or graphic constituents. Constituents are primarily semantic, but they can also be declared «phonetic». Thus in *Shuōwén* there are about four main formulae provided to distinguish graphemes into semantic and phonetic constituents. <sup>ii</sup> They can be represented in the following way:

- a) 从 X 从 Y (从 X 从 Y 从 Z)
- b) 从 XY (从 XY Z) <sup>iii</sup>
- c) 从 X, Y 聲
- d) 从 X 从 Y, Y 亦聲

They are used from the beginning of the text (starting with the 2nd entry in Xú Xuàn's 徐鉉 text):

- 1) *yuán* 元 始也。从一从兀。
- 2) *tiān* 天 顛也。至高無上，从一大。
- 3) *pī* 丕 大也。从一不聲。
- 4) *lì* 吏 治人者也。从一从史，史亦聲。

In some of these formulae, Xǔ Shèn may add the term *shěng* 省. The first occurrences of *shěng* 省 appear under the 52<sup>nd</sup> entry, *yǒng* 禳, and the 66<sup>th</sup>, *jìn* 稷(稷), in Xú Xuàn's 徐鉉 text (abbreviated as DXB below). They correspond to the formula: e) 从 X, Y 省聲。

*yǒng* 禳 設縣蕪爲營，以禳風雨、雪霜、水旱、癘疫於日月星辰山川也。从示，**榮**省聲...(1A 4b).

But Xú Kǎi 徐鍇 or Xiǎo Xú 小徐 (abbreviated as XX or XXB below) provides a different character XX: 从示、**營**省聲。(1.7a)

*jìn* 稷(稷) 精氣感祥。从示、侵省聲... (1A 5b ; 1.8a)<sup>iv</sup>

The evidence for the use of *shěng* 省 in *Shuōwén* can be traced back to the Táng fragmentary manuscripts:

-1) In the manuscript that comprises 188 characters under the radical *mù* 木 «tree/ wood»<sup>v</sup>, 7 of them are graphically analysed with *shěng* 省:

<i>zhà</i> 柵(柵) 編豎木也。从木、刪省聲	(6A 14b ; 11.17a)
<i>shū</i> 梳 理髮者也。从木、疏省聲。	(6A 15b ; 11.18a-b)
<i>zhé</i> 特 槌也。从木、特省聲。	(6A 17b ; 11. 20b)
<i>yīn</i> 槩(槩) 栝也。从木、隱省聲。	(6A 19b ; 11. 23a)
<i>qǐ</i> 棨 傳，信也。从木、啟省聲。	(6A 20a ; 11. 24a)
<i>bì</i> 榘 榘栝也。从木、陞省聲。	(6A 20b ; 11. 24a-b)
<i>zhù</i> 柷 樂，木控也、所以止音爲節。从木、祝省。	(6A 19a ; 11. 24a)

- 2) In the manuscript that comprise 12 characters with the radical *kǒu* 口<sup>vi</sup>, we also find one occurrence of *shěng* 省 under:

*guā* 昏(舌) 塞口也。从口，昏省聲。昏，古文厥。

In other words the term *shěng* 省 should belong to Xǔ Shèn's text or analysis. A short passage under the entry *zhēn* 貞 suggests on the other hand that *shěng* 省 might have been already used before Xǔ Shèn by Jīng Fáng 京房, (77-37) the specialist of the theory of catastrophies and *Yijīng*:

*zhēn* 貞 問也。从卜，貝以爲贄。一曰鼎省聲。京房所說。

Now it is important to note that some differences occur between the Táng manuscript and the Xú brothers versions, not only in the glosses, but also in the graphic analysis. Thus, for example, the three versions show no less than three graphic analysis for *zhà* 柵 «fence, stockade », each corresponding to a different graphic formula:

DXB: *zhà* 柵(柵) 編樹木也。从木、从冊，冊亦聲。楚革切。(6A 14b) → d) 从 X 从 Y, Y

亦聲

XXB: *zhà* 柵(柵) 編樹木。木、冊聲。妻側反。(11.17a) → e) 从 X, Y 聲

Táng MS: *zhà* 柵(柵) 編豎木也。从木、刪省聲。叉白 → e) 从 X, Y 省聲

Since Xǔ Shèn's text underwent all sorts of modifications including the term *shěng* 省, it is not easy to figure out which are the original analysis. Indeed, we have some graphic analysis with *shěng* 省 in DXB that are absent in XXB and vice versa, but we also have examples of different characters preceding *shěng* 省 or *shěng shēng* 省聲 in both versions<sup>vii</sup>. Therefore it is important to keep an eye on both versions.

Consider, for example, the following variations between DX and XX's versions:

DX: Y 省聲 XX: Y 聲

*yuè* 鵲 鳥也。DX: 从鳥、說省聲。(4A 21a)

XX: 从鳥、兌聲。(7.20a)

*yuè* 闕 具數於門中也。DX: 从門、說省聲。(12A 6b)

XX: 从門、兌聲。(23.20a)

*dōu* 啜 講啜, 多言也。DX: 从口、投省聲。(2A 12a)

XX: 从口、彡聲。(3.9b)

DX: Y 聲 XX: Y 省聲

*lèi* 勛 推也。DX: 从力、畠聲。(13B 19a)

XX: 从力、霽省聲。(26.11b)

DX: Y 省 XX: Y 省聲

*tuì* 蛻 蛇蟬所解皮也。DX: 从虫、掙省。(13A 22a)

XX: 从虫、稅省聲。(25.13a)

*xí* 席 籍也。... DX: 从巾、庶省。B【𦉳】<sup>viii</sup>古文(席)从石省。(7B 22b)

XX: 从巾、庶省聲 (14.23a)

*diàn* 甸 天子五百里地。DX: 从田、包省。(13B 15b) 天子五百里內田。

XX: 从田、包省聲 (26. 8b)

DX: O XX: Y 省聲

*yàn* 晏 安也。DX: 从女日。《詩》曰: 以晏父母。(12B 9a)



XX: 从女、晏省聲。《詩》曰: 以晏父母。(24.6b)

In this paper, I have mainly relied on Xú Xuàn's 徐鉉 (or Dà Xú's 大徐) version, but I

have tried to present examples that are identical in both Xú's versions, or at least to indicate when Xú Kǎi's 徐鍇 (Xiǎo Xú 小徐) version differed in its graphic interpretation of *shěng* 省. Since Duàn Yùcái 段玉裁 (1735-1815) has introduced many modifications in his *Shuōwén jiězì zhù* 說文解字注, I have only referred to it when it provided specific or valuable information.<sup>ix</sup>

## 2. The meaning of *xǐng* /*shěng* 省 in Xǔ Shèn's glosses

In the *Shuōwén*, *xǐng* is glossed as « observe, examine (oneself), investigate » (*fǎnxǐng* 反省):

*xǐng* 省  【省(省)】 視也。从省省、从中。  【畺】 古文从少、从囧。(XX: 古文省从少、囧) (4A 8a ; 7.7a)

As noticed elsewhere,<sup>x</sup> in his glosses Xǔ Shèn only provides the meanings that are relevant for the explanations of the graphs. Now, if the meaning « observe, investigate » can be found in some other glosses such as those for *qì* 啓, *xiāng* 相, *mián* 寫, *piǎo* 覲, and *yán* 妍, the meaning « omit, reduce » is used by Xǔ Shèn under the entry *zì* 白, an allograph of *zì* 自:

- *xǐng* / *shěng* 省 « observe, examine (oneself) »:

*qì* 啓 省視也。从目、啓省聲。(4A 5a ; 7.4b) « *qì* is to examine. »

*xiāng* 相 省視也。从目、从木。.. (4A 5a ; 7.4b)

*mián* 寫(寫) 寫寫, 不見也。一曰: 寫寫, 不見省人。从宀、寫聲。 « *mián* as in *miánmián* is to fail to see; an alternative source says: it is to fail to see someone. »

XX: 寫寫, 不見也。从宀、寫聲。一曰: 寫, 不省人。(7B 5a ; 145a)

*piǎo* 覲(覲) 目有察省見也。(no 「見也」 in XXB ) 从見、票聲。(8B 6a ; 16.14a) « *piǎo* is to see something after careful observation »

*yán* 妍(妍) 技也。一曰: 不省錄事。(12B 11a ; 24.8b) « Is to be skillful. An (alternative) source says: it is to fail to investigate and record events.»

- *xǐng* / *shěng* 省 « omit, reduce »

*zì* 白 此亦自字也。省自者, 詞言之气 从鼻出與口相助也。(4A 8b ; 7.7b) « This is also the written word for *zì* 自; as for the abbreviated *zì*, when one speaks the air goes out from the nose and supports the mouth. »

As shown in this last example, *shěng* 省 can be used to show a reduction or an abbreviation of a graph (here *zì* 自).

### 3. The formulaic use of *shěng* 省 in *Shuōwén*

There are two basic formulae with *shěng* 省 in *Shuōwén* that correspond to the two functions the graphic constituents can be attributed:

- the first applies to more than 200 entries in DXB:

**X *shěng* X 省** « it has an abbreviated form of X (as a semantic constituent) »

- the second applies to more than 300 entries in DXB:

**X *shěng sheng* X 省聲** « it has an abbreviated form of X as a phonetic constituent »

#### 3.1. The formula (从) X 省 (about 214 examples in DXB)

If we look in details, this basic formula can take the following forms:

- X 省 (29)

*Qín* 秦 伯益之後所封國。地宜禾。从禾，舂省。一曰秦，禾名。B【森】籀文秦从秝。

(7A 18b ; 13.21b)

*tūi* 蛻 蛇蟬所解皮也。从虫，搯省。(XXB: 从虫、稅省聲。)(13A 22a ; 25.13a)

In this case, both Xú have *shěng* 省 but they differ in their interpretation of the function of the abbreviated constituent, semantic (according to DXB) versus phonetic (according to XXB).

- 从 X 省 (89)

*yōu* 麇 牝鹿也。从鹿，从牝省。(10A 9b ; 19.7a)

*mào* 髦 年九十曰髦。从老，从蒿省。(8A 25a ; 16.7a)

*duò* 隋 裂肉也。从肉，从陞省。(XXB: no 「从」 before 「陞」)(4B 12a ; 8.11b)

- B (A) 或省(X) (37) « (in) the graph B, (A) is alternatively written in an abbreviated form (with the omission of X) »

The formulae with *huò* 或 only concern synchronic graphic variants, whereas the other formulae can apply to any style of graph.

*xiōng* 訥 : 訥或省。(3A 15a ; 5.14b) B 或省

*xiōng* 訥 is a graphic variant of *xiōng* 訥 which is written in an abbreviated way. We would expect 或省聲 since it is the phonetic constituent that is abbreviated here. But we will see other examples of such omissions.

*xiāo* 賈 𠂔或省。(3A 1a ; 5.1a)

B : A 或省 → abbreviation of 2 口 ‘mouth’.

*zī* 𦰇 𦰇或省艸。(1B 19a ; 2.19a)

B : A 或省 X → suppression of 艸 ‘grass’.

-B 或从 X 省 (6) « B is alternatively written with an abbreviated form of X as a semantic constituent »

*jīn* [cén] 欂 青皮木。从木岑聲。B【口】或从口省，口，籀文寢。(XXB:「口，籀文口」作「籀文」) (6A 3a ; 11.3b).

This concerns the phonetic constituent but as we have already seen above, with *xiōng* 訥, Xǔ Shèn does not always find necessary to specify the phonetic nature of the (abbreviated) constituent, especially in the case of graphic variants.

There are about 25 examples (in DXB)(16 in XXB) of *shěng* 省 involving ancient graphs *gǔwén* 古文 with 3 different formulae:

- 古文(A)省 (17 in DXB) (in these cases, DXB and XXB vary a lot: only 9 in XXB)

« The ancient graph (for A) is abbreviated »

*sà* 卅 (卅) :三十并也。古文省。(3A 4a ; 5.5a)

*fēng* 𡗗 :古文封省。(13B 9b ; 26.4a)

- B 古文 A 省 X (1)

« B is the ancient style graph (for A) and it is abbreviated »

*bǎo* 𡗗 古文寶省貝。(7B 5a ; 14. 5a)

- B 古文(A)从 X 省 (7)

« B is the ancient style graph (for A) and it has an abbreviated form of X as a semantic constituent »

*chái* 禱 古文禱从隋省。(1A 3a ; 1. 6a)

*xìn* 信 : B 【亻】 古文从言省。(XXB:古文信省也) (3A 6b ; 5. 7b)

There are some 24 examples (in DXB)(21 in XXB) of *shěng* 省 involving large-seal style graphs *zhòuwén* 籀文 with two different formulae:

- B 籀文(A) 从 X 省 (10)

« 【B】 is the large-seal style graph (for A) and it has an abbreviated form of X as a semantic constituent »

*zhāi* 齋 : 【齋】 籀文齋从鬯省。(1A 3a ; 1. 6a)

*sù* 崇 : 【鬯】 籀文崇从鬯省。(1A 6a ; 1. 8a)

*wéi* 薇 : 【薇】 籀文从微省。(5A 1b ; 9. 1b: 籀文微省 no 从)

- B 籀文(A) 省 (14) (but 11 in XX)

« 【B】 is the large-seal style graph (for A) and it is abbreviated »

*wēi* 【薇】 籀文薇省。(1B 3a ; 2. 3b)

*péng* 【葦】 籀文蓬省。(1B 24b ; 2. 24a-b)

*hāo* 【蕪】 籀文蕪省。(1B 26a ; 2. 25b)

We have the 3 following examples (in DXB and XXB) of *shěng* 省 involving small-seal style graphs *zhuànwén* 篆文 and one involving a contemporary graph *jīnwén* 今文 in DXB but none in XXB :

- B 篆文(A)省 « B is the small-seal style graph (for A) and it is abbreviated »

*xué* 學篆文敦省。(3B 19b ; 6. 20a ; Duàn 3B 41a)<sup>xi</sup>

*sù* 隰 : 【隰(隰)】篆文省。(XXB: 篆文隰省) (14B 6a ; 28. 5a ; Duàn 14B 13a follows XXB)

- A 篆文从 X 省 « A is the small-seal style graph and it has an abbreviated form of X as the semantic constituent»

*xiàng* 鄉 : 【巷】篆文从巵省。(XXB: 篆文从巵省) (6B 21a ; XXB 12. 23b ; Duàn 6B 58b)



- B 今文省 (1) (but none in XXB) « B is the modern graph and it is abbreviated »  
*fǎ* 灋 灋 刑也。平之如水，从水，廌，所以觸不直者去之，从去。灋 【灋(法)】 今文省。.. XXB: 今文灋字。(10A 8a ; 19. 6a ; Duàn<sup>xii</sup> 10A 20a)

### 3.2. The formula X 省聲 « it has an abbreviated form of X as a phonetic constituent »

According to my counting there are about 311 examples of X 省聲 in DXB (including 6 从 X 省聲, 5 或从 X 省聲 and 1 籀文), but I have not counted in detail how many they were in XXB.

- X 省聲 (≅300)  
*méng* 萌 貝母也。从艸、明省聲。(1B 13a ; 2.14a)  
*zhuàn* 瑑 圭璧上起兆瑑也。从玉，篆省聲。(1A 10b ; 1.14a) (Duàn 1A 28a: 从王彖聲)

If we look in details, this basic formula can take different forms such as:

- 从 X 省聲 (6)  
 If the common formula corresponds to 从 XY 省聲, we also have 6 examples of 从 X 从 Y 省聲 including a *cóng* 从 before Y. This is the case for 4 small-seal entries and 2 ancient graphic variants in DXB.<sup>xiii</sup>  
*jiàn* 筭 筭之本也。从筭，从廴省聲。X 【腱】 筭或从肉建。(XXB: 廴省聲) (4B 16a)  
*duò* 墮 山之墮墮者。从山，从隹省聲。(XXB: 从山，隹省聲) (9B 2b)  
*mèi* 魅 老精物也。从鬼、彡；彡，鬼毛。B 【魅】 或从未聲。B' 【𩇛】 古文。B'' 【𩇛】 籀文从彖首，从尾省聲。(9A 15b ; 17.14a<sup>xiv</sup>)

In the following formulae the abbreviation concerns the allographs:

- B, A 或从 X 省聲 (2) « In the graph B, A is alternatively written with the abbreviated phonetic constituent X »  
*liáo* A(膾) 牛腸脂也。从肉、寮聲。.. B 【膾】，膾或从勞省聲。(4B 12b ; 8.12a/b)  
*shāng* 饜 晝食也。从食、象聲。B 【饜】，饜或从傷省聲。(XXB: 饜或从 [𩇛] ) (5B 4a ; 10.4b)

- B, (A) 或从 XY 省聲 (2) « In the graph B, A is alternatively written with X as a semantic constituent and it has an abbreviated form of Y as the phonetic constituent »

*dǎo* 禱 禱牲馬祭也。从示、周聲。.. B【騶(驕)】或从馬、壽省聲。<sup>xv</sup> (1A 5b ; 1.8a)

*qū* 籩 酒母也。从米、籩省聲。B【鞫】，(籩)[籩]或从麥、鞠省聲。(7A 21b ; 13.25b)

- B, (A) 或从 XY Z 省聲 (1) « In the graph B, A is alternatively written with X and Y as semantic constituents and it has an abbreviated form of Z as the phonetic constituent »

*pǐ* 圮 毀也。《虞書》曰：方命圮族。从土、己聲。B【醜】，圮或从手、从非，配省聲。

Note that XXB proposes a different graphic analysis in this case: 圮或从手、配省，非聲。(13B 11b ; 26.5b).

### 3.3. The formula *bù shěng* 不省 « not abbreviated »

The *bù shěng* 不省 formula usually appears with all sorts of graphic variants: older styles of graphs as well as synchronic allographs. There are about 15 common examples in DXB and XXB .

*lín* 閻 今閻似鳩而黃。从隹、冫省聲。 B【鬪】籀文不省。(XXB:「籀文鬪不省」)

*hōng* 訇 駭言聲。从言，勻省聲。漢中西城有訇鄉。又讀若玄。B【訇】籀文不省。

*zhé* 訾 失气言。一曰不止也。从言，讎省聲。傅毅讀若惛。B【讎】籀文訾不省。

*róng* 融 炊气上出也。从鬲，蟲省聲。 B【融】籀文融不省。

*zī* 梓 楸也。从木，宰省聲。 B【梓】或不省。

*xí* 襲 左衽袍。从衣，讎省聲。 B【襲】籀文襲不省。

*tàn* 歎 吟也。从欠，鷦省聲。 B【歎】籀文歎不省。

*jūn* 麋 麋也。从鹿，困省聲。 B【麋】籀文不省。

*xué* 學 夏有水，冬無水，曰學。从水，學省聲。讀若學。B【學】，學或不省。

*sòng* 送 遣也。从辵、夙省。B【送】籀文不省。

Included in DXB and Duàn (7A 551a), but not followed by 不省 in XX:

*qiū* 秋 禾穀孰也。从禾，龠省聲。七由切。B【穰(穰)】籀文不省。(7A 18b XX 13. 21b)

### 3.4. Double *shěng* formulae

In some cases two *shěng* 省 may appear in a graphic analysis like, for example, under the following entries:

*qióng* 鬲 所以枝鬲者。从鬲省，鬲省。(3A 22b ; 6.2a)

*xī* 醢 酸也。作醢以鬻以酒。从鬻、酒並省，从皿。皿，器也。(5A 20a ; 9.19b)

*ruǎn* 𦍋 柔韋也。从北，从皮[𠂔]省，从𦍋[𦍋]省。(3B 14b ; 6.16b)

*jì* 苟 自急救也。从羊[𦍋]省，从包省。从口[𠂔]，口猶慎言也。从羊[𦍋]，羊與義、善、美同意。凡苟之屬皆从苟。(9A 14b ; 17.13a)

*náng* 囊 橐也。从橐省、襄省聲。(6B 4b ; 12.7a)

*pāo* 囊 囊張大兒。(XXB:「囊」作「囊」。)从橐省、匍省聲。(6B 5a ; 12.7a)

### 4. The particularities of *shěng* 省 (in the graphic analysis)

- In all these examples *shěng* 省 can apply to semantic as well as to phonetic constituents:

a) *semantic constituents* (with the formula X 省):

*wèi* 𧈧 畏 惡也。从白，虎省。(鬼頭而虎爪，可畏也)。𧈧【𧈧】古文省。(9A 16a ; 17.14b)

*xíng* 𧈧 省 視也。从眉[𧈧]省，从中。.. 𧈧 古文从少从囧。(4A 8a ; 7.7a)

*huì* 會 會 合也。从亼[亼]，从曾省。曾，益也。.. 𧈧【𧈧】古文會如此。(5B 7a ; 10. 6b)

*cāng* 倉 倉 穀藏也。倉黃取而藏之，故謂之倉。从食[倉]省，口象倉形。.. 倉【倉】奇字倉。(5B 7a ; 10. 7a)

b) *phonetic constituents*<sup>xvi</sup> (with the formula X 省聲):

*jìn* 稊(稊) 精氣感祥。从示、侵省聲...

*róng* 髟 亂髮也。从髟，茸省聲。

*róng* 茸 艸茸茸兒。从艸聰省聲。(1B 25a ; 2. 24b)

*dú* 犢 牛子也。从牛，瀆省聲。

c) Note that, in some cases, the formula X 省 covers the abbreviation of a phonetic constituent without mentioning it:

*qīng* 檠 檠屬。从桼，熒省。As noted by Duàn Yùcái (7B 1b-2a), here one would expect *yíng*

*shěng shēng* 熒省聲.

- If certain abbreviated constituents are limited to a semantic role (*fěn* 粉, *gòu* 葍, *hào* 號, *gāo* 高, *lǎo* 老, *jué* 爵, 颯, *gǔn* 藁, etc.) or to a phonetic role (*xué* 學, *jué* 決, *qīn* 侵, *yì* 役, *shān* 刪, etc.), like other constituents, abbreviated constituents can usually play both roles (*yíng* 熒, *bāo* 包, *wèi* 胃, *yīn* 隱, *zhòng* 重, *wēi* 微, etc.):

For example, *wēi* 微 which first plays the role of a phonetic constituent in *wēi* 薇, *wéi* 薇, and *wéi* 職(口)<sup>xvii</sup> can be declared an abbreviated phonetic constituent in *méi* 徽, *wēi* 微, *huī* 徽, *huī* 徽, and *qǐ* 豈, as well as an abbreviated semantic constituent in *zhēng* 徵 and in □, the large-seal style graph for *wéi* 薇.

*méi* 徽 中久雨青黑。从黑，微省聲。

*wēi* 微 小雨也。从水、微省聲。

*huī* 微 幟也。以絳微帛箬於背。从巾、微省聲。

(XX writes 「徽」 instead of 「微」) (7B 22a ; 14.22a)

*huī* 徽 衰幅也。.. 从糸、微省聲。

*qǐ* 豈 還師振旅樂也。.. 从豆、微省聲。 (5A 16a ; 9.15b)

*zhēng* 徵 召也。从微省..

(XX: 从口、微省) (8A 17a ; 15.16a)

*wéi* □ 籀文从微省。

- Most abbreviated constituents only appear once (i.e. under one single entry), but some of them appear at least twice. We can find as much as 23 instances of the constituent □ presented as an abbreviation of 5 different characters: 熒省聲, 榮省聲, 勞省聲, 瑩省聲 and 營省聲. There are 9 高省, 8 決省聲 in DXB (but only 6 in XXB), 8 學省聲, 8 老省 (but 7 in XXB), 8 癯省, 5 侵省聲, 7 微省聲, 5 履省, 5 弦省, 4 寒, (+ 1 寒省聲), 4 蟲省聲, 4 稀省聲 (but 2 in DXB), 3 从省聲, 3 刪省聲, 3 役省聲, 3 藁省, 3 啓省聲, 2 隨省聲 (+ 1 □省 + 1 □省聲 + 2 脩省聲 + 1 脩省聲 + 1 陸省 + 2 隋省), 2 勻省聲, 2 瀆省聲, 2 □省, 2 蒿省, 2 引省聲, 2 亦省聲, 2 曹省聲, 2 陞省聲, 2 鞞省聲, 2 肘省聲, 2 焚省聲, 2 暴省聲, 2 難省聲, 2 □省聲, 2 葍省, 2 犛省, 2 粉省, 2 稽省, 2 鹽省, 2 夔[口]省, 2 號省, 2 爵[夔]省. On the other hand, the following graphs are presented as abbreviated phonetic as well as abbreviated semantic constituents: 4 包省(聲), 2 尾省(聲), 2 胃省(聲), 2 隱省(聲), 2 重省(聲), 2 宰省(聲), 2 旋省(聲), etc.

- Constituents abbreviated in certain graphic analysis can be themselves analysed as having an abbreviated constituent in their graphic structure when they are listed as entries. For example, in the graphic analysis of *róng* 髟, *róng* 茸 is declared abbreviated, but as an entry *róng* 茸 is also analysed as having an abbreviated form of *cōng* 聰: 聰省聲.

*róng* 髟 亂髮也。从髟,茸省聲。(9A 10a ; 17. 9a)

→ *róng* 茸 艸茸茸兒。从艸,聰省聲。(1B 25a ; 2. 24b)

*Long* 龍 童省聲

→ *tóng* 童 重省聲

*quē* 缺 缺省

→ *quē* 缺 決省聲

*jiǎn* 藺 滿省

→ *zhǐ* 滿 莘省

*niè* 隍 毀省

→ *huǐ* 毀 毀省聲

睪 *jiǎng* 將省聲

→ *jiàng* 將 醬省聲

*shāng* 賈 商省聲

→ *shāng* 商 章省聲

*wò* 鸛, *xué* 鸛, *xué* 鸛, *xué* 嶽, *xué* 嶽, *jué* 覺, *què* 嶽, *kù* 譽 學省聲

→ *xué* 學 篆文敦省

*lǔ* 魯 鈍詞也。从白, 煮省聲。

→ *zhǎ* 煮 藏魚也。南方謂之鮓, 北方謂之煮。从魚, 差省聲.<sup>xviii</sup>

We note that for all these examples except *jiǎn* 藺 (analysed in 3 semantic constituents), Xǔ Shèn only recognises two graphic constituents.

- A few radicals are analysed as having an abbreviated form of another constituent, as we can see with *jīng* 京 [高] « capital city », *xiǎng* 高 « offering » and *fù* 富 all presented as having an abbreviated form of *gāo* 高 « high » as a semantic constituent (从高省). But this is also the case for *lì* 隸 (从尾省), *huì* 會 (从曾省), *cāng* 倉 (从食[倉]省), etc.

- In some cases entries under a radical are all declared to have an abbreviated form of this radical. The radical *gǔn*, for example, is analysed the following way: *gǔn* 𧈧 囊 囊也。从束 (束) 囙聲。.. « *gǔn* is a kind of bag. It has *shù* 'bind' as a semantic constituent, 囙 is the

phonetic constituent. » (6B 4b ; 12.7a), but the four characters classified under *gǔn*: *tuó* 橐, *náng* 囊, *gāo* 橐, and *pāo* 橐 are all declared to have an abbreviated form of this constituent since the inner part of *hùn* 囙, which corresponds to the phonetic constituent in the middle of the graph, is each time replaced by another phonetic constituent put in □. In other words 石, 咎, 襄, and 甸 (both abbreviated) replace 豕 in □ in the following graphs:

*tuó* 橐 囊也。从橐省，石聲。(6B 4b ; 12.7a)  
*náng* 囊 囊<sup>xix</sup> 囊也。从橐省<sup>xx</sup>，襄省聲。( 𠄎 ) (6B 4b ; 12.7a)  
*gāo* 橐 車上大橐。从橐省，咎聲。(6B 4b ; 12.7a)  
*pāo* 橐 囊張大兒。从橐省，甸省聲。( 𠄎 ) (6B 5a ; 12.7a)

Under the radical *mèng* 𦉳 « to dream » » (graphically analysed as: 从宀从疒，夢聲) all the entries (*qǐn* 𦉳, *mèi* 寐, *wù* 寤, *rǔ* 寤, *mí* 寐, *jì* 寤, *bìng* 病, *yì* 寤, *hū* 寤) are declared to have an abbreviated form of *mèng* 𦉳 (从𦉳省). This is also the case for all the entries under *lǚ* 履 « shoes », *yán* 鹽 « salt », *xián* 弦 (弦) « string for a musical instrument », *gāo* 高 « high », *cuàn* 爨 « cook »<sup>xxi</sup>, etc.<sup>xxii</sup>

## 5. The function of *shěng* 省

In the use of *shěng* 省 we have to distinguish different functions:

- 1) Omission or absence of a constituent
- 2) Merging of strokes or constituents
- 3) Abbreviation of a constituent:
  - a) The abbreviated constituent does not exist as a independant character
  - b) The abbreviated constituent exists as a independant character

### 5.1. Omission or absence of a constituent

The phrase *shěng* 省 X usually means that X has been omitted. It usually involves ancient styles graphs. The ancient graph for *dé* 得, for example, is written without the constituent *chì* 彳: 𠄎古文省彳.

*qiú* 裘: 求古文省衣。<sup>xxiii</sup> (XXB: 古文求。此與裘意同) (8A 25a)

*yún* 雲：云古文省雨。(XXB: 古文云) (11B 8a)

*bǎo* 審：古文寶省貝。(7B 5a)

## 5.2. Merging of constituents or strokes

As shown by Chēn Shihūī 陳世輝 (1979: 166) and Qiú Xīguī 裘錫圭 (1988: 161), in a few cases, *shěng* 省 refers to the fusion of some strokes or constituents in a graph:

*zhāi* 齋 戒，潔也。从示齊省聲。

the two strokes 二 in 示 are mixed with the 2 strokes of 齊；

*pí* 罷 如熊，黃白文。从熊，罷省聲。

the two constituents 罷 are fused

*lì* 黎 履黏也。从黍，利省聲。利，古文利。

In this last example, we have two *hé* 禾, one in *lì* 利 and one in *shǔ* 黍. Xǔ Shèn declares *lì* 利 to be abbreviated as it plays the phonetic role.

## 5.3. Abbreviation of a constituent

In the case of the abbreviation of a constituent, we have to distinguish whether the abbreviated constituent exist or not as an independant character (in *Shuōwén*).

### 5.3.1. The abbreviated constituent does not exist as an independant character

In some cases, the abbreviated constituent does not exist as an independent graph in *Shuōwén*.

- a) The grapheme 𠄎, for example, is not recorded as a radical nor as an entry in *Shuōwén*, but Xǔ Shèn refers to it 8 times as a phonetic constituent in an abbreviated form of *xué* 學:

<i>xué</i> 𠄎 學省聲	<i>xué</i> 𠄎 學省聲
<i>xué</i> 𠄎 學省聲	<i>xué</i> 𠄎 學省聲
<i>jué</i> 覺 學省聲	<i>què</i> 𠄎 學省聲

kù 譽 學省聲      wò 鶯 學省聲

Note that *xué* 學 is itself the result of an abbreviated form 學：篆文敦省。

All these characters had an entering tone 入聲 in ancient Chinese (and apparently the same main vowel in Old Chinese according to Pān Wùyún's reconstructions).<sup>xxiv</sup>

- b) The grapheme *yìng* (?) 𦉑 is also not recorded as a radical nor as an entry in *Shuōwén*. Xǔ Shèn nevertheless takes it as a recurrent constituent, without feeling the need to declare it a radical.<sup>xxv</sup> Like in the preceding case (𦉑), this is most probably because 𦉑 and 𦉑 basically stand for phonetic constituents and radicals do not usually represent pure phonetic graphemes in *Shuōwén*.

Now, in order to indicate this phonetic constituent 𦉑, Xǔ Shèn introduces no less than five different characters including it: *yíng* 熒, *róng* 榮, *yíng* 瑩, *yíng* 營,<sup>xxvi</sup> and *láo* 勞, which is most puzzling. If we look in details we have:

-14 *yíng* 熒<sup>xxvii</sup>省聲 in DXB used to note the following different modern pronunciations<sup>xxviii</sup>:

5 *yíng* (*yíng* 瑩, *yíng* 營, *yíng* 營, *yíng* 榮, *yíng* 瑩 (but 營省 in XXB))

3 *yīng* (*yīng* 瑩, *yīng* 榮, *yīng* 榮)

1 *yìng* (*yìng* 瑩)

2 *xíng* (*xíng* 榮, *xíng* 榮)

1 *yòng* (*yòng* 營)

1 *róng* (*róng* 榮)

1 *qióng* (*qióng* 輦)

One wonders here why *róng* 榮 is not declared the abbreviated phonetic constituent in *yòng* 營 nor in *qióng* 輦 ?

- 3 *róng* 榮省聲, but no 榮省 (and 2 榮聲<sup>xxix</sup>)

1 *yǒng* 榮

1 *yíng* 營

1 *yīng* 鶯

Here again, one wonders why *yíng* 熒 is not declared the abbreviated phonetic for *yíng* 營



and *yīng* 鶯 ?

- 1 *yíng* 瑩省聲 (从玉熒省聲) (no 瑩聲 in *Shuōwén*)
- 1 *yīng* 彜 (彜)

Why not giving 熒省聲 here?

- 1 (or 2) *yíng* 營省聲

There is only one occurrence of *yíng* 營省聲 in DXB (but 2 in XXB)

- 1 鞏 *qióng*

According to Pān Wùyún's phonological reconstructions (in TLS) we see good phonological reasons operating in most of these examples to use the same phonetic constituent at least in Old Chinese,<sup>xxx</sup> but why did Xǔ Shèn use four different characters for that ?

- 2 *láo* 勞省聲<sup>xxx</sup> in DXB and no 勞省 (but 3 勞聲<sup>xxxii</sup>)
- 1 *luò* 犖
- 1 *liáo* 瞞 (graphic variant of *liáo* 瞭)

According to Pān Wùyún (TLS), the ancient and old pronunciations had the same initials.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

As for *qǐng* 靚 and *láo* 勞, they are both declared in DXB to have 勞 as a semantic constituent (勞省), which is rather surprising for *qǐng*.<sup>xxxiv</sup> This could be a mistake since XX takes it as a phonetic abbreviation (省聲). But it is not clear why Xǔ Shèn analyses *láo* 勞 as 勞省 ? (Unless one is ready to follow Xǔ Shèn's forced graphic interpretation of 勞 which curiously differs from the gloss he provides for that entry).<sup>xxxv</sup>

- 靚 *qǐng* 泉屬。从靚，勞省。But Note that XX writes: 勞省聲 (7B 1a ; 13. 28a)
- 勞 *láo* 劇也。从力[力]，勞省。勞，火燒冂，用力者勞。 (13B 19a)

- c) The grapheme 啟 is not recorded as an entry in *Shuōwén*, but Xǔ Shèn declares it a

phonetic constituent under *qǐ* 綦:

*Qǐ* 綦 擻繒也。一曰微幟，信也，有齒。从系攷聲。

Thus it is surprising to see that in spite of one occurrence of 攷 as a phonetic constituent Xǔ Shèn needs to use an abbreviated constituent of *qǐ* 啓 under the 3 following entries:

*qì* 啓 省視也。从目，啓省聲。(4A 5a ; 7.4b)

*qǐ* 啓 雨而晝姓也。从日，啓省聲。(7A 2a)

*qǐ* 榮 傳，信也。从木，啟省聲。(6A 20b) Táng MS

Here again, the problem, is that we do not know what was the original text. In other words, are we dealing with later modifications of the original text, some possible mistakes, some incoherence in Xǔ Shèn's analysis or any special motivation that we can not grasp anymore ?

- If, on the other hand, *zhào* 肇 could not have been analysed as having the abbreviated phonetic constituent *qǐ* 啓, we might have thought that *qǐ* 啓省 could have been possible here. Now the fact that Xǔ Shèn analyses *zhào* 肇 as having the abbreviated phonetic constituent *zhào* 肇 (肇省聲) shows that his graphic analysis is based on a precise knowledge of graphic constituents that we can call immediate graphic constituent.

*zhào* 肇 擊也。从支，肇省聲。(3B 15a)

Indeed, instead of analysing *zhào* 肇 as having the constituents 攷 and 聿, Xǔ Shèn identifies the constituent *pū* 支 (glossed 小擊也。从又卜聲) as the semantic constituent. He then interprets in a coherent way for his graphico-semantic analysis the other part<sup>xxxvi</sup> in the graph and proposes an abbreviated form of *zhào* 肇 as the phonetic constituent. In this way he has only two immediate constituents in the graph. One may wonder why he does not simply choose *zhào* 扉 (which is an entry in *Shuōwén* glossed: 始開也。从戶从聿。XX: 从戶、聿聲) as the phonetic constituent. But it is probably because he can then suggest that *zhào* 肇 and 肇 are also graphic variants.

### 5.3.2. *The abbreviated constituent exists as an independent character*

In most cases, abbreviated constituents exist as independent characters in *Shuōwén*, but in some cases their pronunciation may appear too far from that of the entries, or they refer to different words.

- a) The pronunciation of the entry and that of the phonetic constituent may vary a lot:

When the pronunciation of the phonetic constituent appears too far from that of the entry, Xǔ Shèn introduces another word with an identical or close pronunciation that is written with the same grapheme, and declares it to be the phonetic constituent in an abbreviated form.

- *cè* 冊 (册) versus *shān* 刪 → *shān/shàn/zhà*

*shān* 刪 剝也。从刀冊。冊，書也。

*shān* 珊 珊瑚 色赤，生於海，或生於山。从玉、刪省聲。(1A 14b ; 1. 18a) (Duàn 1A 36b)

*shān* 姍 誹也。一曰：翼便也。从女、刪省聲。(XXB: 一曰：女臭也。从女、刪省聲。

一曰：姍，翼便也)

*shàn* 獾 惡健犬也。从犬、刪省聲。

In the *Táng* manuscript, we also have:

*zhà* 柵 編豎木也。从木、刪省聲。

In all these cases, we can see that *cè* 冊 (册)<sup>xxxvii</sup> could be felt as a doubtful or too far-fetched phonetic constituent. Thus by referring to another word pronounced *shān* 刪, Xǔ Shèn could provide a better way to read the characters he analyses. Now why did he choose *shān* 刪 « to cut » rather than *shān* 姍, for example ? Could it be because it is less negative than *shān* 姍 « to mock » glossed as 誹也 « to slander » ?<sup>xxxviii</sup>

- The same thing could be said with *jué* 決 and *guài* 夬<sup>xxxix</sup>. According to Chēn Shihuī 陳世輝 (1979: 140-141), Xǔ Shèn analyses *jué* 越, *jué* 趺, *yuè* 突, *jué* 疾, *yuè* 缺 and *jué* 齶<sup>xl</sup> (but not XX: 从夬、夬聲) with the abbreviated phonetic constituent 決省聲 because their pronunciation is close to *jué* 決; and *kuài* 快, *jué* 缺, and *jué* 龔<sup>xli</sup> with 夬聲 because their

pronunciation is closer to *guài* 夬. He can then make a distinction between their pronunciation which have changed with time even though this is not visible anymore in the graphs, but I leave this to the specialists of the reconstruction of late Hàn Chinese pronunciations.<sup>xlii</sup>

- b) The abbreviated constituent refers to another word with another pronunciation.

In the following cases, Xǔ Shèn cannot declare 虫 to be the phonetic constituent since it refers to another word pronounced *huǐ* « snake »:

*róng* 融 蟲省聲。【融】籀文融不省。  
*tóng* 蝃 蟲省聲  
*tóng* 蝓 蟲省聲  
*tóng* 蝓 蟲省聲

Besides, as we can see, the large-seal style graph for *róng* 融 is written without any abbreviation. Therefore, in his graphic analysis of *róng* 融, *tóng* 蝃, *tóng* 蝓, and *tóng* 蝓, Xǔ Shèn can rightfully declare *chóng* 蟲 « insect, worm » to be the abbreviated phonetic constituent.

The same thing can be said for *lóng* 龍 and *dá* 讎 since they too refer to different words with different pronunciations:

*zhé* 讎 讎省聲。【讎】籀文讎不省。(3A 14b ; 5.14a-b)  
*xí* 龔 讎省聲。【龔】籀文龔不省。(8A 19b ; 16.2b)



In *yōu* 麀 « doe », Xǔ Shèn cannot simply declare *bǐ* 匕 which refers to another word « dagger » to be a semantic constituent, therefore he has to use the *shěng* 省 strategy (从牝省) to be able to provide a proper meaning of the graph (*pìn*) 匕 « female ».

*yōu* 麀 牝鹿也。从鹿，从牝省。(10A 9b ; 19.7a)

- c) Semantic motivation of *shěng* 省

Sometimes, Xǔ Shèn tries his best to motivate the choice of a graphic constituent in its relation to the gloss he proposes.

- For example, in the case of the pronoun-object *yōu* 攸, which he glosses as « flowing water » (行水也。从支从人, 水省), Xǔ Shèn introduces a water related constituent in order to provide a relevant interpretation of the graph as « flowing water » 行水. He thus explains the vertical stroke as an abbreviated form of *shuǐ* 水 « water ». In this he is helped by the Qín Shǐhuáng's inscribed stone which has the graph including the water constituent:

 攸 行水也。从支、从人、从水省。 【口(汝)】秦刻石繹山文攸字如此。(3B 17 ; 6.18b)

- We find this kind of semantic motivation in the following cases where the character that corresponds to the semantic constituent declared abbreviated also appears in the gloss:


*chuí* 髻 髮**隋**也。从髟, **隋**省。(9A 10b)

*kēng* 罍 餘**堅**者。从石, **堅**省。(9B 11a)

*cháo* 𣶒 水**朝**宗于海。从水, **朝**省。(11A 10b)

Note that in this last example, Xiǎo Xú coherently presents 朝 as an abbreviated phonetic constituent (XX: 从水、朝省聲). In Xǔ Shèn's logic, abbreviated phonetic constituents may also be chosen for semantic reasons and not always declared phonetic. This is probably also the case for *máo* 犛 « tail »:

*máo* 犛 犛牛尾也。从犛省, 从毛。(2A 5b p.30 ; 3.5a)

*lái* 𧇧 彊曲毛, 可以箸起衣。从犛省, 來聲。 【口】古文犛省。(2A 5b ; 3.5a)

Here *lí*/ *máo* 犛 and *lái*/ *lí* 𧇧 are both glossed in relation to yaks *máo* 犛, and are also analysed as having the abbreviated semantic constituent *máo* 犛 (西南夷長髦牛也。从牛口聲 (2A 5b ; 3.5a)).

- In *nìng* 佞 « to be eloquent, to flatter » 巧調高材也。从女, 信省 (XX has a different graphic analysis: 从女、仁聲) one understands why Dà Xú following Xǔ Shèn (or not ?) chooses 信 to be an abbreviated semantic constituent: anyone too skillful at flattering should not be trusted.

- In some examples, it is a graphic resemblances that motivates Xǔ Shèn's introduction of



qiū 𥝌 秋 禾穀孰也。从禾，口省聲。【𥝌】籀文不省。(XX does not write 不省)

The term *shěng* 省 then gave Xǔ Shèn the possibility to explain all sorts of phenomenon related to the evolution of the script and helped him clarify the structure of some opaque graphs inherited from older times. It does not only suggest the evolution of the script, it also helps Xǔ Shèn specify some changes or some links between ancient and modern graphs, as well as some of the particularities of this graphic system.

- 1) Even though this is no longer the proper analysis<sup>xlvi</sup>, Xǔ Shèn distinguishes the constituent *zhī* 之 (出) hardly recognizable in *shì* 事 and *shì* 市, and uses *sheng* 省 to clarify what he thinks is the graphic structure and the nature of the phonetic constituent in these graphs:

shì ((𥝌)) 事 職也。从史，之(出)省聲。.. 𥝌 【𥝌】古文事。  
 shì ((巜)) 市 買賣所之也。市有垣，从門从巜，巜，古文及，象物相及也；之(出)省聲。

In these examples both the small-seal style graphs and the old graph allowed Xǔ Shèn a more detailed graphic analysis. Now, with our access to ancient graphs, we can see Xǔ Shèn's errors in the analysis of these graphs, but his method which consists in referring to older available graphs at his time is nevertheless more rigorous than that of those who only based their analysis on contemporary graphs.

- 2) In complex or opaque graphs, the use of *shěng* 省 can help Xǔ Shèn clarify the immediate constituents and their structural interaction.

yù 鬱 木叢生者。从林，鬱省聲。(6A 25a ; 11.30b)

náng 囊 橐也。从橐省，襄省聲。(6B 4b ; 12.7a)

pāo 橐 囊張大兒。从橐省，匚省聲。

gòng 贛 (贛) 賜也。从貝，贛省聲。【贛】籀文贛。(6B 8a ; 12.11a: 【贛】籀文省作)

qióng 窮 夏后時諸侯夷羿國也。从邑，窮省聲。(6B 11a ; 12.14b)

We can see that Xǔ Shèn simply analyses all these complex graphs in only two immediate constituents instead of many more. This is also the case for *róng* 鬢 and *róng* 茸. But Xǔ Shèn's introduction of a 省聲 formula here is also induced by the fact that *ěr* 耳 can not be taken as a semantic constituent, therefore he provides other possible abbreviations for the phonetic constituent *ěr* 耳 with closer readings.

*róng* 鬢 亂髮也。从髟，茸省聲。(9A 10a ; 17. 9a)

*róng* 茸 艸茸茸兒。从艸聰省聲。(1B 25a ; 2. 24b)

- 3) With *shěng* 省, Xǔ Shèn is able to deal with some of the particularities of the Chinese writing system such as, for example, the possibility for triple (龠) or double constituents (雥) to be reduced to single ones ( → 隹).

Reduction of repeated graphs:

*jí* 集 : 龠或省。 龠 → 隹

*xiāo* 𠂔 : 𠂔或省。 𠂔 → 𠂔

*jīn* 緊 : 絲省。 絲 → 系

And even sometimes in spite of the fact that non-simplified and simplified graphs can refer to different words as we have seen with *chóng* 蟲 « insect » and *huǐ* 虫 « reptile / snake ».

- *Shěng* 省 also allows Xǔ Shèn to show that with the evolution of the script some constituents have been exchanged or replaced, like, for example, in *xìn* 信:

*xìn* 信 : 古文从言省。

- *Shěng* 省 can also be used to provide connexions between written words:

a) between the different ways to write the same words:

*nìng* 甯 所願也。从用、寧省聲。

*níng* 寧 願詞也。从巧、盞聲。

*yù* 鬱 木叢生者。从林，鬱省聲。



*Níng* 寧 is the old form for 寧 and as Chēn Shihūi 陳世輝 (1979: 160) has pointed out *nìng* 甯 and 寧 are just different ways to write the same word ; *yù* 鬱 and 鬱 are also graphic variants.

b) connexions between graphs.

No matter how conjectural Xǔ Shèn's abbreviations may be, he might also use the term *shěng* 省 to suggest some links between graphs. He can analyse the radical *jīng* 京 [高] « capital city » as having an abbreviated form of another radical *gāo* 高 « high », and the radical *cāng* 倉 « warehouse » as having an abbreviated form of another radical *shí* 食 « food » to show their graphico-semantic links. In his graphic analysis of *hé* 禾, Xǔ Shèn suggests that a simple stroke can be related to a more complex form no longer visible but with the same meaning 'hanging down' expressed by the small-seal style graph *chuí* 垂 and thus he introduces graphico-semantic links between these two graphs:

*hé* 禾 嘉穀也。二月始生，八月而孰，得時之中，故謂之禾。禾，木也。木王而生，金王而死。从木，从垂省。垂象其穗。凡禾之屬皆从禾 (7A 14a ; 13. 16b<sup>xlvii</sup>)  
*chuí* 垂 艸木華葉垂。〔XX writes 「華葉」 instead of 「葉華」〕象形。凡垂之屬皆从垂。【揚 (物)】古文。

In the small-seal style graph for *hé* 禾, the upper part is hanging down and that is what Xǔ Shèn wants to express when he writes 从垂省.

With *fāng* 方<sup>xlviii</sup> Xǔ Shèn, who probably had *fǎng* 舫 « boat » in mind, tries to make more explicit the motivation between the graph and the meaning of the word he pretends it refers to by introducing two 'boats' 舫 supposedly abbreviated.

*fāng* 方 併船也。象兩舟省、總頭形。凡方之屬皆从方。【汧】方或从水。(8B3a ; 16. 11a)

In order to justify the meaning related to boats, that may be induced by the allograph written with the constituent 'water', Xǔ Shèn introduces a no longer visible graphic simplification based on a pure interpretation of graphs.

- *Shěng* 省 in the end can help retrieve the proper meanings associated with graphs or graphemes: 虫 *chóng* /*huǐ* « insect :: snake » ; 匕 *bǐ* /*pìn* « dagger :: female », etc.:

yōu 麀 牝鹿也。从鹿，从牝省。(10A 9b; 19.7a)

With the technical term *shěng* 省, Xǔ Shèn can show that in this case we are not dealing with *bǐ* 匕 « dagger » but with another word *pìn* 牝 « female animal » written or abbreviated as 匕.

There are many incoherences and conjectural abbreviated forms in Xǔ Shèn's analysis, some of them may correspond to later alteration of the texts, but some of them might also indicate that we are still ignorant of certain ancient pronunciations or reading traditions. Considering the fact that Xǔ Shèn had no real access to ancient graphs, the work he did is quite remarkable.

## Conclusion

In a more general attempt to make explicit the tools developed by Xǔ Shèn to analyse the Chinese writing system around the first century AD, I have studied all the formulae with *shěng* 省 (X 省, 省 X, X 省聲) in *Shuōwén*. Since phonetic constituents are primarily graphic, and since there are many cases for which Xǔ Shèn does not specify the phonetic function of the abbreviated constituent (see 朝 above), in my study I did not separate X 省 from X 省聲 like most authors did.

As we have seen, the *shěng* 省 formulae were not only used for the small-seal style graphs, they were also used for older styles of graphs: ancient and large-seal, as well as for graphic variants. In other words, the term involves the whole writing system as such from ancient to modern times, and shows that Xǔ Shèn was aware of the evolution of the script, a fact ignored by some of his contemporaries.<sup>xlix</sup> Other authors have pointed out that there were many mistakes of different kinds<sup>l</sup> in Xǔ Shèn's graphic analysis, but what I find interesting with Xǔ Shèn's use of *shěng* 省 is that we can see his kitchen and what he does in it. In other words, we can see how with a limited access to ancient scripts and documents, he manages to analyse graphically and phonetically quite chaotic and sometimes quite opaque graphs inherited from older times. The term *shěng* 省 gave him the possibility to deal with all sorts of phenomenon related to the evolution of the script and clarify immediate constituents in graphs. In short, it is an important tool for his methodological approach of the Chinese writing system<sup>li</sup>, for explaining graphs and interpreting written words as indicated in the title of his huge work: 說文解字 « Explain graphs to interpret written words ».

## NOTES

- <sup>i</sup> See, for example, Wáng Yún 王筠 (1784 - 1854) *Shuōwén shìlì* 《說文釋例》 (1987: 57-69), Chēn Shihuī 陳世輝 (1979: 137-148), Qiú Xīguī 裘錫圭 (1988: 160-165), Hé Jiǔyíng 何九盈 (1991: 4-18), Féng Yùtāo 馮玉濤 & Péng Xiá 彭霞 (2006: 6-11); Wú Yànnuó 吳艷娜 (2006: 89-90), Liú Yuè (2011: 45-46), Zhèng Niū 鄭妞 (2014: 1-4), etc.
- <sup>ii</sup> In principle these formulae apply to each entry but we find some exceptions under the entries glossed as tabooed names because of the emperor (*shàng huì* 上諱), such *hù* 祜, *zhuāng* 莊, etc., and also under *dǐng* 鼎 in Xú Xuàn or Dà Xú's version (but not in Xiǎo Xú's) (see note XIII).
- <sup>iii</sup> Other formulae play with the internal construction of the graphs, but it is not necessary to list them here. For a more detailed study see F. Bottéro 2013 *Lùn Xū Shèn zìxíng fēnxi de yīxiē tèdiǎn* « 論許慎字形分析的一些特點 » [Some particularities in Xū Shèn's graphic analysis], *The Journal of Chinese Characters* 漢字研究 (*Hanja Yeongu*) 8 (2013.06) p. 1-28.
- <sup>iv</sup> In this paper I first give in parenthesis the reference to Dà Xú's version (DXB) of the *Shuōwén*, here (1A 5b), and then the reference to Xiǎo Xú's version (XXB) in *Shuōwén jiězì xì zhuàn* 說文解字繫傳 here (1.8a).
- <sup>v</sup> This manuscript which is kept in the Kyōu shyooku Library きょううしょおく 杏雨書屋, in Osaka, comprises 6 leaf that correspond to 1/50 of the full text. See Mò Yǒuzhī 莫友芝 2002: 232.
- <sup>vi</sup> Reproduced in Zhōu Zǔmó 周祖謨 (1966 : 724) “Táng běn *Shuōwén jiězì yǔ Shuōwén jiù yīn*” 唐本說文解字與說文舊音 [The Tang manuscript of *Shuōwén jiězì* and the old pronunciations in *Shuōwén*]; *Wèn xué jí* 問學集 vol. 2, as well as in Kurata Jun'nosuke 倉田淳之助: « *Setsumon tenkan yoroku* » 說文展觀餘錄, *Tōhō hakuhō* 東方學報 10: 145-146 (1939).
- <sup>vii</sup> As we have seen above (p.16) with *yǒng* 榮, DXB: 从示, 榮省聲; XXB: 从示、營省聲.
- <sup>viii</sup> B stands for an older style of graphic variant I am not providing but which modern equivalent is given in brackets: 【囙】.
- <sup>ix</sup> For more details concerning Duàn's modification of the graphic analysis with *shěng* 省 see Wáng Yuanzhì 王元釋 1988: 323-325.
- <sup>x</sup> Françoise Bottéro & Christoph Harbsmeier 2008 «The *Shuowen jiezi* Dictionary and the Human Sciences in China», *Asia Major* Third Series, Volume 21, Part 1, p. 249-271.
- <sup>xi</sup> According to Duàn (3B 41a), in this case since *xué* 學 is presented as the small-seal style graph, the entry 斆 should then correspond to the ancient graph.
- <sup>xii</sup> Duàn has changed the graphic structure into: 从水。廌所以觸不直者去之，从廌去。
- <sup>xiii</sup> Note that Xiǎo Xú does not write 从 for the 2 entries *jiàn* 筭 and *duò* 墮, but provides two other graphic analysis with 从 Y 省聲 for *tiàn* 冎 and for *dǐng* 鼎. *Tiàn* 冎 舌兒。从谷省，象形。(XXB: 象形。从谷省聲) (3A 2a; XX 5 2b) and *dǐng* 鼎 三足、兩耳，和五味之寶器也。昔禹收九牧之金，鑄鼎荆山之下，入山林川澤，螭魅罔兩莫能逢之，以協承天 休。(《易》卦巽木於下者，爲鼎，象析木以炊也。籀文以鼎爲貞字。凡鼎之屬皆从鼎。(XXB writes 「𩰫」 instead of 「𩰫」

- and 「析木以炊鼎也」 instead of 「析木以炊也」, before giving the graphic analysis 「从貞省聲」 absent in DXB.) 古文以貞爲鼎，籀文以鼎爲貞字。凡鼎之屬皆从鼎。(7A 13a; 13 15b).
- xiv Xiǎo Xú writes: mèi 𦉑 老精物也。从鬼、彡; 彡, 鬼毛。B【𦉑】古文。B'【𦉑】籀文𦉑 从彡首，从尾省聲。B''【𦉑】或从未。
- xv Xiǎo Xú gives a different abbreviation for the allograph of 壽:【騶】.
- xvi The so-called phonetic constituent is taken as a grapheme related to the pronunciation of the character and not, as suggested by the English translation, as a string of phonemes.
- xvii Wēi 薇 菜也，似藿。从艸、微聲。B【薇】籀文薇省; wéi 薇 竹也。从竹、微聲。B【薇】籀文从微省。(XXB:【薇】); wéi 𦉑(𦉑) 司也。从見、微聲。
- xviii In Pān Wùyún's 潘悟雲 reconstructions (as given in TLS, <http://tls.uni-hd.de/>) we can see that both *lǔ* 魯 and *chā* 差 had the same main vowel in Old Chinese: 魯 *lǔ* - \*luo 郎古切 遇攝 合口呼 一等韻 上聲 來母 模部 / 从魚聲 魚部 \*\*g-raa?; 差 *chā* - \*tshyɛ 初牙切 假攝 開口呼 二等韻 平聲 初母 麻部 / 从左聲 歌 1 部 \*\*skhraal.
- xix Note the difference between the small-seal style graph and the modern graph 囊 for *náng*, in which the 'tree' constituent 木 has been replaced by the lower part of 衣.
- xx Xiǎo Xú (12.7a) does not record the first abbreviation: 从囊，襄省聲.
- xxi Wáng Yun 王筠 notes in his *Shuōwén shìlì* 說文釋例 3.15b (1987: 57), that the two characters *zuān* 𦉑 and *mén* 𦉑 are not analysed as having the abbreviated constituent *cuàn* 𦉑. But both of them are not classified under the radical *cuàn* 𦉑 as they are not related to the « cooking » meaning.
- xxii This confirms the fact that radicals are not taken as simple graphs (*dútǐzì* 獨體字) by Xǔ Shèn.
- xxiii In Chǔ (Bāoshān 包山, Guōdiàn 店郭店) and Qín documents (Shuǐhǔdì 睡虎地), 求 could stand for 裘, see *Xiǎoxué táng* 小學堂:  
<http://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/chuwenzi?kaiOrder=3245>  
and <http://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/qinwenzi?kaiOrder=3245>.
- xxiv If we look at the phonological reconstructions provided by Pān Wùyún 潘悟雲 in TLS: we can see the coherence of the abbreviated form of 學 as a phonetic constituent: 學 *xué* - \*h̥ɣɔk 胡覺切 江攝 開口呼 二等韻 入聲 匣母 覺部 / 从學聲 覺 1 部 \*\*gruug; 覺 *jué* - \*kɣɔk 古岳切 江攝 開口呼 二等韻 入聲 見母 覺部 / 从學聲 覺 1 部 \*\*kruug; 譽 *kù* - \*khuok 苦沃切 通攝 合口呼 一等韻 入聲 溪母 沃部; 𦉑 *wò* - \*ʔɣɔk 於角切 江攝 開口呼 二等韻 入聲 影母 覺部; 𦉑 *hú* - \*huok 胡沃切 通攝 合口呼 一等韻 入聲 匣母 沃部 / 从學聲 覺 1 部 \*\*gluug.
- xxv Both Chēn Shìhuī 陳世輝 (1979: 163) and Qiú Xīguī 裘錫圭 (1988: 162) have pointed out that the equivalent of 𦉑 existed in bronze inscriptions. Hé Jiǔyíng 何九盈 (1991: 17) considers that not recognising 𦉑 as a phonetic constituent is one of Xǔ Shèn's mistake, and that 𦉑, 榮, 勞, 瑩, or 營省聲 should all be replaced by 𦉑聲.
- xxvi Note the different choice of characters (*yíng* 營 or *yíng* 𦉑) between the Xú brothers.
- xxvii According to Qiú Xīguī (1988: 162) Xǔ Shèn is wrong when he analyses *yíng* 𦉑 as 从焱、冫 since the older graph for 𦉑 in bronze inscriptions was composed of 2 'fire' and what became 冫 in modern graph.
- xxviii Note that there is no 𦉑聲 in *Shuōwén*, in other words *yíng* 𦉑 is never taken as the phonetic

- constituent. 《說文》中沒有分析成‘榮聲’的字。
- xxxix There are two entries with *róng* 榮 as a phonetic constituent in *Shuōwén*: *yíng* 莖 艸旋兒也。从艸、榮聲; and *róng* 嶸 峭嶸也。从山、榮聲。
- xxx 榮 *yíng* - \*fiɛŋ 戶肩切 梗攝 合口呼 四等韻 平聲 匣母 青部 / 从榮聲 耕部 \*\*g<sup>w</sup>leŋ; 榮 *róng* - \*fiɛŋ 永兵切 梗攝 合口呼 三等韻 平聲 云母 庚部 / 从榮聲 耕部 \*\*g<sup>w</sup>eŋ; 瑩 *yíng* - \*fiɛŋ 永兵切 梗攝 合口呼 三等韻 平聲 云母 庚部 / 从榮聲 耕部 \*\*g<sup>w</sup>eŋ; 營 *yíng* - \*jiɛŋ 余傾切 梗攝 合口呼 三等韻 平聲 以母 清部 / 从營聲 耕部 \*\*g<sup>w</sup>leŋ; 瑩 *yíng* - \*jiɛŋ 余傾切 梗攝 合口呼 三等韻 平聲 以母 清部 / 从榮聲 耕部 \*\*g<sup>w</sup>leŋ; 營 *yòng* - \*fiɛŋ 爲命切 梗攝 合口呼 三等韻 去聲 云母 庚部 / 从榮聲 耕部 \*\*g<sup>w</sup>eŋs & *xìng* - \*hiɛŋ 休正切 梗攝 合口呼 三等韻 去聲 曉母 清部 / 从榮聲 耕部 \*\*qh<sup>w</sup>leŋs.
- xxxii Does the fact that both *luò* 犖 and *liáo* (療) (written 【營】) have an « ox » related gloss makes it another reason for Xǔ Shèn to use *láo* 勞 in an abbreviated form as a (phonetic) constituent, even though *láo* 勞 « labour » is not glossed in relation to the ox but as 劇也 « difficult ». *Luò* 犖 駁牛也。从牛、勞省聲; and *liáo* 療 牛腸脂也。从肉、寮聲。《詩》曰：取其血療。X【營】，療或从勞省聲。
- xxxiii There are three 勞聲 in *Shuōwén*: *láo* 嘑 嘑呶，謹也。从口、勞聲; *láo* 癆 朝鮮謂藥毒曰癆。从疒、勞聲; and *lào* 澇 水出扶風鄠，北入渭。从水、勞聲。
- xxxiiii 勞 *láo* - \*lau 魯刀切 效攝 開口呼 一等韻 平聲 來母 豪部 / 从勞聲 宵 1 部 \*\*raaw; 犖 *luò* - \*lyɔk 呂角切 江攝 開口呼 二等韻 入聲 來母 江部; 營 / 療 *liáo* - \*leu 落蕭切 效攝 開口呼 四等韻 平聲 來母 蕭部 / 从勞聲 宵 2 部 \*\*reew.
- xxxv Indeed whatever the pronunciation *qǐng* or *qiǒng* for 糶 *qǐng* - \*khiɛŋ 去潁切 梗攝 合口呼 三等韻 上聲 溪母 清部 or *qiǒng* - \*kheŋ 口迴切 梗攝 合口呼 四等韻 上聲 溪母 青部, we see close or identical ancient finals (ɛŋ or eŋ) with that of the other characters listed in note 30, according to Pān Wùyún (TLS).
- xxxvi As an entry, *yíng* 熒 (10B 1a) is glossed: 屋下鐙燭之光 (XX writes 「燈」 instead of 「鐙」), but under *láo* 勞 it is interpreted as 熒, 火燒。In other words we see inconsistencies arising here since *yíng* 熒 would have two meanings, one as an entry and one as a constituent.
- xxxvii Now it is true that neither *hù* 戶 (護也。半門曰戶 « guard, half of a door is called *hù* ») nor *yù* 聿 (所以書也 « the means that is used to write ») have semantic or phonetic relation with *zhào* 肇. On the other hand, in *Shuōwén*, *zhào* 肇 is simply glossed as to the name of Emperor Hàn Hédì 和帝 (r. 88-105), and stands as a tabooed name (*zhào* 肇 上諱), but this does not prevent Xǔ Shèn from using it here for his graphic analysis.
- xxxviii The radical *cè* 冊(册) is glossed the following way: 符命也。諸侯進受於王也。象其札一長一短、中有二編之形。凡冊之屬皆从冊。 B【籀(籒)】古文冊从竹, and is analysed as a semantic constituent in *sì* 嗣: 諸侯嗣國也。从冊、从口, 司聲。 B【學】古文嗣从子, as well as in *biǎn* 扁: 署也。从戶、冊。戶冊者, 署門戶之文也; and in 刪(刪): 剝也。从刀、冊。冊, 書也。
- xxxix Here, it is interesting to note that in the special case of *zhà* 柵 where we possess the reading instructions (又白, see p.18) of the Táng manuscript, both Xú brothers have changed the graphic analysis and adapted the *fanqie* spelling to the new analysis:

DXB: *zhà* 柵(柵) 編樹木也。从木、从冊, 冊亦聲。楚革切。(6A 14) (for *cè* 册: 楚革切)(2B 20b)

XXB: *zhà* 柵(柵) 編樹木。从木、冊聲。妻側反。(11, 17a) (for *cè* 册: 測麥反)(4.17b)

If we look at Pān Wùyún's reconstructions (TLS) we have the following reconstructed pronunciations:

白 *bái* [bó] - \*byək 傍陌切 梗攝 開口呼 二等韻 入聲 並母 陌部 / 从白聲 鐸部 \*\*braag

革 *gé* - \*kyək 古核切 梗攝 開口呼 二等韻 入聲 見母 麥部 / 从革聲 職部 \*\*kruuug

麥 *mài* - \*myək 莫獲切 梗攝 開口呼 二等韻 入聲 明母 麥部 / 從來聲 職部 \*\*mruuug

册 *cè* - \*ʃik 阻力切 曾攝 開口呼 三等韻 入聲 莊母 職部 / 从則聲 職部 \*\*skruug

The problem is that we have many cases in which the phonetic constituent can be questionable, but where Xǔ Shèn, or at least Dà Xú and Xiǎo Xú, do not record any *shěng shēng* 省聲. Dà Xú, for example, mentions quite a few *fēi shēng* 非聲 «wrong phonetic» for which we can see that there are no phonological links (i.e. both initials and rhyme are different) between the character and the declared phonetic constituent, without changing the text.

<sup>xxxix</sup> 決 *jué* - \*ket 山合四入屑見 / 从夬聲 月 2 部 \*\*k<sup>w</sup>eed; 夬 *guài* - \*kyei 古邁切 蟹攝 合口呼 二等韻 去聲 見母 夬部 / 从夬聲 月 1 部 \*\*k<sup>w</sup>raads in Pān Wùyún's reconstructions (TLS).

<sup>xl</sup> But Chēn Shihuī did not include *jué* 夬 and *quē* 缺.

<sup>xli</sup> Chēn did not mention *jué* 夬, *jué* 夬, *jué* 鳩, *jiá* 契, *mèi* 袂, *jué* 馱, *jué* 抉 all analysed as 夬聲 in DXB.

<sup>xlii</sup> Note that DX analyses *jué* 夬 as 从水、从夬 and XX as 从水、夬聲. In DX and XX's versions, we find 決省聲, 夬聲, 決聲 as well as 缺聲. Considering the fact that these formulae are differently used by DX and XX and noting, for example, that after the graphic analysis (从目、夬聲) for the entry *jué* 夬, DX adds «According to me and others, it should be analysed as 从決省» (臣鉉等曰: 當从決省), Wáng Yún 王筠 (1988: 68) concludes that 決省聲 in the two brothers's versions must come from previous modifications of the *Shuōwén*.

<sup>xliii</sup> Note the graph *wèi*: 𠄎 in the bronze inscription *Shǎo jù jiàn* 少虞劍 (late Spring and Autumn Period, *Jichéng* 集成 11696).

<sup>xliv</sup> See Chēn Shihuī 陳世輝 (1979) and Qiú Xīguī 裘錫圭 (1988: 160-165) for concrete examples of Xǔ Shèn's mistakes with *shěng* 省 analysis.

<sup>xlv</sup> If I agree with Zhèng Niū 鄭孃 (2014: 1) who takes *shěng shēng* 省聲 as a supplementary tool for Xǔ Shèn's analysis of graphs, but not with Hé Jiūyíng 何九盈 (1991: 18) who considers *shěng shēng* to be a method to construct characters 省聲無疑是漢字構造的一個方法, I took a different perspective from both of them since I did not limit my study to *shěng shēng* 省聲 like they did. On the other hand, it is clear from the examples given in this paper that even *shěng shēng* 省聲 helped Xǔ Shèn clarify the structure of graphs and their immediate constituent.

<sup>xlvi</sup> The ancient graphs show a different constituent than 'foot' in 事: 𠄎 (乙 2766(甲)); 𠄎 (頌簋(金) 西周晚期); 𠄎 (哀成叔鼎(金) 春秋晚期); 𠄎 (睡.日甲 130 背(秦)), *Xiǎoxué táng* 小學堂: <http://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/yanbian?kaiOrder=729>. The graph *shì* 市 does not appear in oracle bone and in bronze inscriptions.

- <sup>xlvii</sup> XXB: 禾 嘉穀也。从二月始生，八月而熟，得時之中和，故謂之禾也。禾，木王而生，金王而死。从木，从口省。口象其采也。凡禾之屬皆从禾。
- <sup>xlviii</sup> *Fāng* 方 which often plays the role of a phonetic constituent or has the meaning « directions » is presented by Xǔ Shèn as a radical with a special meaning related to « boat ».
- <sup>xlix</sup> In his postface (15A 3b), Xǔ Shèn criticises those who only based their graphic analysis on *lishū* 隸書 style graphs pretending that discovered older graphs were pure inventions.
- <sup>1</sup> Qiú (1988: 163) writes, for example: « There are many wrong interpretations of *shěng* in *Shuōwén*, we can distinguish three kinds of mistakes: A. Wrong analysis of characters; B. Taking a current phonetic constituent for one that underwent abbreviation; C. Taking an abbreviated phonetic constituent for another one. » 「『說文』關於省聲的說法有很多是錯誤的，這些錯誤大體上可以分為三類：A. 錯析字形，B. 把一般的聲旁錯認作經省略的聲旁，C. 把从甲字省聲的字說成从乙字省聲。」
- <sup>ii</sup> As shown by Chēn Shihuī 1979 the *shěng* 省 method is still a good procedure 手段 to analyse and explain complex graphs such as those found in bronze inscriptions.

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〈中文摘要〉

## 《说文解字》“省”概念的研究

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提要：这篇文章主要介绍《说文解字》中包含“省”字句式的研究。要理解许慎在汉字及字形分析方面的独创性及其贡献，就需要研究他在《说文解字》中运用的术语，其中就有“省”这个涉及多种含义、用法非常复杂的术语。本文首先介绍《说文》中“省”的特殊性和不同用法，然后介绍它在字形分析中所具有的重要意义。“省”的概念不仅可以指某个偏旁或所谓字形“成分”的省略，也可以指某个义符或声符的简略形式，还可以指某些字形中公用的偏旁，有时还可以指某字的异体。

“省”在《说文》中，是许慎汉字分析的一个极为重要的工具，它完美地解决了那些古代流传下来的复杂、难解的字形问题。“省”的运用表明许慎对他分析的古字、今字都有极为深入的了解。研究“省”在《说文》中的功用，对于我们理解许慎的汉字分析法具有重要的价值。

关键词：《说文解字》、“省”、字形分析

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