

## MOTIVATION OF THE CHINESE CHARACTERS WITH OBJECT SEMANTICS

Motivational features that determine the choice of the main semantic component of complex Chinese characters with object semantics are established and described in this article. The analysis of the determinatives that are included in multicomponent characters of various semantic types (nominations of clothing, transport, furniture, weapons, containers, etc.) made it possible to reveal their frequency regarding of different thematic relevance. The material of the study based on the group of compound characters (structurally including from two graphemes in a sign, one of which is a determinative), denoting object names selected according to the principles of classification of lexical units, undertaken when compiling the semantic dictionary ed. N. Yu. Shvedova, dissertation research by M. I. Oleinik, as well as the described classes of object nouns (物品类名词) in the study of Zhang Daoxin, Zhang Jiahua. The total volume of the analyzed characters with object semantics amounted to 967 units. The analysis of the selected signs showed that the choice of the determinative of the complex Chinese character with object semantics is based on the relevance of the material as the most significant historically or functionally characteristic of the described representation of objects that are spatially limited, can be identified and counted. The evolution and development of the basic graphemes of Chinese writing determine, at the same time, the relevance of such motivational features as category, form and object, as well as their different frequency within different semantic groups of complex signs with object semantics.

*Keywords:* motivation, determinative, character, object, semantics, sign, Chinese.

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## МОТИВИРОВАННОСТЬ КИТАЙСКИХ ИЕРОГЛИФИЧЕСКИХ ЗНАКОВ С ПРЕДМЕТНОЙ СЕМАНТИКОЙ

В данной статье путем анализа производных сложносоставных знаков китайского языка с предметной семантикой устанавливается набор мотивировочных признаков, обуславливающих выбор основного смыслового компонента иероглифов. Определяется набор детерминативов, входящих в состав многокомпонентных иероглифов, описывающих в языке предметы различного типа (обозначения одежды, транспорта, мебели, оружия, контейнеров и др.). Выявляется частотность детерминативов относительно иероглифических номинаций предметов разной тематической отнесенности. Материалом выполненного исследования послужила группа сложносоставных иероглифов (структурно вклю-

чающие от двух графем в знаке, одна из которых — детерминатив), обозначающих предметные имена, отобранные согласно принципам классификации лексических единиц, предпринятым при составлении семантического словаря под ред. Н. Ю. Шведовой, диссертационном исследовании М. И. Олейник, а также описанным классам предметных существительных (物品类名词) в работах Чжан Даосинь, Чжан Цзяхуа. Общий объем проанализированных иероглифов с предметной семантикой составил 967 единиц. Анализ отобранных знаков показал, что выбор детерминатива сложного иероглифического знака китайского языка с предметной семантикой обусловлен релевантностью «материала» как наиболее значимой исторически или функционально характеристикой описываемого представления об объектах, которые пространственно ограничены, могут быть выделены и подсчитаны. Эволюция и развитие базовых графем китайского письма детерминируют, в то же время, релевантность таких мотивировочных признаков, как «категория», «форма» и «объект», а также их различную частотность в пределах разных семантических групп сложных знаков с предметной семантикой.

*Ключевые слова:* мотивированность, детерминатив, иероглиф, предметное имя, семантика, знак, китайский язык.

## Introduction

One of the topical research areas in the study of the Chinese characters at the present time becomes the revealing of the motivation features of complex signs. The important step towards solving this problem can be made by the analysis of the semantic components of complex characters, the choice of which determines the specific construction of Chinese logograms [Gotlib, 2019], as well as the entire writing system as a whole [Rezanenko, 1985].

Starting from Xu Shen's dictionary [Xu Shen, 2006], Chinese writing is organized according to the radical principle (部首), which allows not only to form the corresponding areas of characters, primarily in lexicographic sources, but also to serve the basis of the methodological system of teaching the Chinese language with the help of the author's frame [Filimonova, 2019], nest [Molotkova, 2017], programming [Ioffe, 2012], monad and modus [Sharavyeva, 2020] and other structures, united by some general associative-semantic idea. This idea, laid down in the works of Russian and Western European sinologists back in the 19th-early XX centuries [Vasiliev, 1884; Karlgren, 1923; Wieger, 1965], is subsequently reflected as a relative allocation of semantically minimal parts of the Chinese writing (see S. P. Andrews' elementary characters, V. F. Rezanenko's basic characters, I. V. Sharavyeva's graphomonades, A. D. Gring and K. V. Karaseva's primitives etc.), and in the area of differentiation of the

meaning of the characters. For example, the Russian lexeme “жить” corresponds to three Chinese characters (活 (determinative “water”), 住 (determinative “person”), 过 (determinative “movement; step”), which, according to the character classification, are not included in one (single core semantics “жить”), but into three different character groups (with the determinatives “water”, “man” and “movement; step”), which, according to Tan Aoshuang [Tan Aoshuan, 2004, p. 14], is far from being a purely formal association for convenient search for signs, as it may seem when study dictionaries built on the radical principle. Tan Aoshuang shows the semantic potential of the determinative and its ability to convey different meanings of the whole sign using the example of the Russian verb “жить” and its Chinese correlates. Russian sentences 1) Старик живет; 2) Старик живет в Москве and 3) Старик плохо живет correspond to Chinese 1) 老头儿活着 (活 (determinative “water”), 2) 老头儿住在莫斯科 (住 (determinative “man”)), 3) 老头儿日子 (生活) 过的不好 (过 (determinative “movement; step”). In the first example, the determinative “water” represents the meaning of physical existence, in the second, the determinative “man” expresses permanent location in some limited space, and in the third example the determinative “movement; step” means “to live”, and often with a negative evaluative connotation [Tan Aoshuan, 2004, p. 14].

From the above example, it becomes obvious that in the Chinese writing determinatives are the set of motivational features that determine the construction of the entire writing system, and, probably, also determine the significant discrepancies between oral and written language, noted by Stephen Andrews in 1854 [Andrews, 1854, p. 22] and V. P. Vasiliev in 1898: “There isn’t a single language in the world in which ... the written language differs from the spoken language as much as in the Chinese language...” [Vasiliev, 1884, p. 1].

On the one hand, character associations according to the radical principle (部首) can be considered as semantic areas of signs, where the radical is the semantic pointer to the object area through the definition of a prototype object or feature with which the concept is closely related. These connections can pass along the line of similarity of the form, the choice of the most frequently used material in the manufacture (竹 ‘bamboo’ — 笔 ‘writing tool-pen’), correlation with the organ of the human body and its function (目 ‘eye’ — 瞳 ‘peer’), an instrument with which an action is performed (手 ‘hand’ — 把 ‘hold firmly’) etc.

On the other hand, the question arises regarding the reverse process, i. e. what motivational associations can unite signs with the certain common nuclear meaning of object, process, abstract ideas, etc., what se-

semantic determinative components can be distinguished in such groups of units and, finally, what motivational features determine their inclusion in complex characters. The answers to the above mentioned questions are in the centre of our attention and is the aim of this research.

## Methods and material

The material for solving the problem included a group of compound characters (structurally from two graphemes in the sign, one of which is a determinative), denoting object names. They are the nominations of instruments (笛 'flute', 笔 'pen', 锤 'hammer', 剑 'sword' etc.), containers (桶 'bucket', 盆 'basin', 篮 'basket' etc.), furniture (柜 'wardrobe', 镜 'mirror', 桌 'table' etc.), clothing (衫 'shirt', 裤 'trousers' etc.), vehicles (艇 'boat', 船 'boat', 橇 'sledge'), natural objects (星 'star' etc.), selected according to the principles of classification of lexical units, undertaken when compiling the semantic dictionary ed. N. Yu. Shvedova [Shvedova, 1998], dissertation of M. I. Oleinik [Oleinik, 2001], as well as the classes of object nouns (物品类名词) described in the works of Zhang Daoxin, Zhang Jiahua and others. Since it is well known that semantic derivation is not associated with the graphic form of the sign, i. e. the secondary meanings of signs are not motivated by its form, only signs with the etymologically first meaning of an object were included in the material of the study. Consequently, the signs object meaning of which developed later under the influence of both linguistic and extra linguistic factors, were not included in the material of the research.

The sources for selecting material for our study were, first of all, the first lexicographic works on the Chinese language [说文解字, 康熙字典], etymological dictionaries [字源查询, 汉字字典], as well as modern Chinese explanatory dictionaries [汉语规范词典]. The total volume of the analyzed characters with object semantics amount to 967 units.

## Results and discussion

The analysis of the meaning of complex characters with object semantics showed that the inclusion of a determinative in their composition is made due to a number of factors associated with the high relevance for Chinese speakers of such properties as the "material" and "function" of the described object. This determines the semantic organization of character groups according to the relevance of a certain characteristic or differential feature of the described representation. Thus, the semantic organization of Chinese writing turns out to be non-correlative or partially correlative

(separate groups of units) to the semantic organization of lexical units. So, for example, the word 桌 ‘table’, according to the lexical-semantic classification can be assigned to the category “Furniture designations”, however, the determinative of the hieroglyphic sign 桌 ‘table’, which displays this concept in writing, indicates not the category, but the sign from which this item was most often made (木 ‘wood’).

It becomes obvious that for the graphical representation (processes, objects, constant or variable signs, abstract concepts) in the Chinese writing, there is a special set of semantic components, which if we consider the group of characters — nominations of objects, consists of 68 graphemes-determinants, which is 32 % of the entire system of basic graphemes [Rezanenko, 1985] or simple logograms in the theory of O. M. Gotlib [Gotlib, 2019] presented in the Chinese writing. Consequently, the high relevance of the designation of object leads to the “involvement” in this process of the third of all means available in the set of simple characters (214). This subsystem of means is a combination, first of all, of graphemes that allow representing in graphics either categorical feature of semantics (34 %) or differential properties (66 %) (most often the material from which the object is made). This leads to a specific semantic organization of the Chinese characters within object names in particular, and the entire system in general.

The set of semantic determinative components that are included in complex signs of the Chinese language with object semantics consists of such graphemes as 木 ‘wood’, 钅 ‘metal’, 竹 ‘bamboo’, 土 ‘earth’, 艹 ‘grass’, 衤 ‘clothing’, 皿 ‘vessel’, 口 ‘mouth’, 纟 ‘silk’, 车 ‘vehicle’, 火 ‘fire’, 刀 ‘strength’, 石 ‘stone’, 舟 ‘boat’ etc.

Most often complex character signs with object semantics include such determinants as 木 ‘wood’, 钅 ‘metal’, 竹 ‘bamboo’, 土 ‘earth’, 艹 ‘grass’ (more than 45 % of the total number of units). The data obtained testify to the high relevance, first of all, of the motivational attribute “material” in the nomination of objects in Chinese writing. However, the data obtained regarding the entire system of object names, since in any case they are a general indicator of various semantic types of designations (furniture, clothing, transport, containers, etc.), cannot be considered as a single motivational feature for all nominations of objects, regardless of their type. The analysis of each of the semantic areas of object names showed that motivational signs can vary: “Furniture nominations” — “material”, “Clothes nominations” — “category”, “Household items nominations” — “material”, “Nominations of writing instruments” — “material”, “Nominations of transport” — “category” etc. In total, we have identified 4 moti-

vational features (material, category, form, object), frequency of which differs relatively to the entire system of object names.

The most common among object names are signs the motivational feature in the creation of which is the “material” from which the given object was most often made. They are 木 ‘wood’, 钅 ‘metal’, 竹 ‘bamboo’, 土 ‘earth’, 艹 ‘grass’, 纟 ‘silk’, 石 ‘stone’ etc. For example, 床 ‘bed’ (wood), 篾 ‘sticks’ (bamboo), 毯 ‘carpet’ (wool), 钳 ‘tongs’ (metal), 碑 ‘stele’ (stone), 铃 ‘bell’ (metal) etc.

Less often, the motivational feature for creating multicomponent characters with the object semantics of the Chinese language is such features as “category” (裤 ‘trousers’ (clothes), 船 ‘boat’ (boat)), “shape” (卷 ‘bundle’ (roll up), 帚 ‘broom’ (stick)) and ‘object’, with which the functional characteristic of the item is associated (炉 ‘stove’ (fire), 巢 ‘nest’ (wood)). At the same time, it should be noted that, despite the low sign-forming productivity of these determinants relative to the entire system of designations of object names, within certain semantic groups of designations, these motivational features become, on the contrary, leading ones. Thus, in the group “Nominations of clothing items”, most of the characters contain the determinative representing the categorical attribute (衤 ‘clothes’), for example, 衫 ‘shirt’, 裤 ‘trousers’, 裙 ‘skirt’, 袍 ‘robe’, 袁 ‘floor-length dress’ etc. A similar situation is observed in the group “Nominations of transport” (艇 ‘boat’ (boat), 船 ‘boat’ (boat), etc.).

Among the semantic groups included in the material of our research (furniture, household items, stationery, musical instruments, working tools, accessories, parts of buildings, transport, weapons, sports equipment, parts of vehicles, etc.), the largest area of the nomination was made up of object names denoting working tools of various types (锤 ‘hammer’, 钻 ‘drill’, 锉 ‘file’, 铲 ‘shovel’, 锥 ‘awl’, 锯 ‘saw’ etc.). The most frequent motivating feature in the creation of the characters of the described group is the “material” from which this or that object was made. The most common determinative among the signs denoting work tools was the determinative 钅 ‘metal’, which accounted for 35.9% of the nominations presented in this group. The determinative 竹 ‘bamboo’ is the basis of 10.3% of the characters of this semantic group, 石 ‘stone’ is less frequent (7.7%) etc. For example, 磁 ‘magnet’ (stone), 鏃 ‘chisel’ (metal) etc.

The semantic group “Nominations of household items” consists of objects names of dishes, appliances, means intended for cleaning and cleaning the house (杯 ‘cup’, 桶 ‘bucket’, 帚 ‘broom’), children’s toys, textile products used to furnish a bed (被 ‘blanket’, 垫 ‘lining’, 枕 ‘pillow’), items designed to preserve other items or protect them from pollution and other negative effects (套 ‘case’, 盒 ‘box’, 盖 ‘lid’), bathroom and toilet accessories

that perform an auxiliary function (簾 ‘curtain’) etc. As well as in the semantic group “Nominations of working tools”, most of the characters are motivated by the attribute “material” (for example, 梳 ‘comb’ (wood), 毯 ‘carpet’ (wool), 篾 ‘sticks’ (bamboo), 锁 ‘castle’ (metal) etc.).

At the same time, the inclusion of a determinative (for example, 木 ‘wood’) do not always testify to the motivation caused by being related to the material of manufacture of the object. The high semantic potential of each determinant of Chinese writing leads to the possibility of its functioning as a motivator of various features. In particular, for example, in the case of 枕 ‘pillow’, the etymological dictionary describes the history of the creation of the sign as follows: whose head is leaning against a tree.... The inclusion of the determinative 木 ‘tree’ is thus motivated to the connection with the place of rest and the position of the body. The object 木 ‘tree’ acts as the head localizer when a person is resting. The motivational sign “object” also determines the inclusion of complex multicomponent signs and other semantic components, in particular, 火 ‘fire’, which can be found, for example, in the hieroglyph 灯 ‘lamp’, where the associative line with fire as a light source is obvious.

The semantic group “Nominations of furniture” includes mobile or built-in objects of reality names, occupying a certain volume in space, necessary for furnishing residential and public premises, as well as other various areas of human stay (座 ‘armchair’, 床 ‘bed’, 桌 ‘table’). The most frequently used determinatives are 木 ‘wood’ and 钅 ‘metal’, for example, 椅 ‘chair’ (wood), 板 ‘board’ (wood), 镜 ‘mirror’ (metal) etc.

The group “Nominations of musical instruments” included signs, the motivational feature for the creation of which was the “object” and “material of manufacture” (锣 ‘gong’, 笛 ‘flute’ etc.). Thus, the gong is a traditional ancient Chinese percussion musical instrument that belongs to metal idiophones and is made of the material close to bronze, it became the motivational basis for the presence of the determinative 钅 ‘metal’ in this character. Similar example can be given with the character 笛 ‘flute’, where the upper part of the sign is formed by the determinative 竹, which means “bamboo”, indicates the material from which a typical Chinese flute is made. Some of the units are formed by using the determinative 口 ‘mouth’ (埙 ‘ancient musical instrument, ocarina type’, 器 ‘musical instrument’, 叭 ‘trumpet’). Consequently, the relevance of the feature “object-source (producer) of sound” is reflected in the character nomination of wind instruments, while the semantic feature “material” is leading in the nomination of musical instruments that were historically made from a certain type of material, for example, 琴 ‘qin’, the zither (a seven-stringed plucked musical instrument similar to a table harp) includes the determinative 玉 ‘Jade’

in a reduplicated form which in ancient times reflected a certain type of harpsichord, which was usually made of jade stone. At the same time, according to one of the versions, the character was originally depicted pictographically as the guqin itself, when viewed from the side. The upper lines depicted strings, and the rounded lines depicted a resonant chamber, external similarity became the basis for the choice [Smirnov, 2019].

The semantic group “Nominations of garments” includes characters denoting products or a set of products that protect the body from the negative effects of the environment and perform aesthetic functions. This semantic group is made up of outerwear (衫 ‘shirt’, 袍 ‘robe’), headwear (帽 ‘hat’, 罩 ‘cap’), hosiery (袜 ‘sock’), shoes (靴 ‘boots’). In addition to the names of clothing items, this group can also include the names of various adornments (镯 ‘bracelet’, 圈 ‘ring’, 箍 ‘hoop’), which belong to its periphery [Oleynik, 2001, p. 25]. It confirms the legitimacy of attributing the names of jewelry to items of clothing and the data of the “Russian Semantic Dictionary”, in which the names of jewelry are located in the same section with the names of items of clothing [Shvedova, 1998].

The analysis of the character nominations of these objects showed that the most frequent determinative among the characters that make up the group “Nominations of clothing items” is the categorizing determinative 衤 ‘clothes’, which is included in 39 % of signs, for example: 裤 ‘trousers’, 裙 ‘skirt’, 袍 ‘robe’ etc. Less frequent motivational feature “material” (22 %) (扇 ‘fan’ (feathers), 镯 ‘bracelet’ (metal), 箍 ‘hoop’ (metal), 帽 ‘hat’ (fabric) etc.). The determinative 足 ‘leg’ is included in the character 跟 ‘heel’, which specifies a part of the shoes. At the same time, the holonym 鞋 ‘boots (shoes)’ is formed graphically with the help of the determinative “skin”, which indicates the non-correlation of the choice of the semantic component along the line of holo-meronymic relations.

The semantic group “Nominations of parts of buildings” combines the names of individual interconnected structural parts or elements of reality that have a specific purpose. First of all, the character 房 ‘building’, which is above-ground buildings with premises for various activities, can be attributed here, further 墙 ‘wall’, which serves as a fence between the premises from the outside space or separating them from other premises, 梯 ‘stairs’, which serves to communicate between premises located on different floors. Other examples of nominations of parts of buildings can also serve as signs that included in the above mentioned group: 塔 ‘tower’, 桥 ‘bridge’, 泉 ‘fountain’ [Oleynik, 2001]. 56 % characters are based on such motivating feature as “material”, which in 44 % is represented by the determinative 木 ‘tree’: 栅 ‘fence’, 框 ‘frame’, 梯 ‘ladder’. The motivational feature “material” can also be expressed by the determinants 钅 ‘metal’ and



石 ‘stone’ (see 钟 ‘bell’ and 碑 ‘stele’). The least common determinative is 土 ‘land’ (17%), for example, 塔 ‘tower’, 堡 ‘fortress’, 墙 ‘wall’.

Due to the panchrony of the Chinese signs [Aleksakhin, 2015], the historical features of the development of Chinese society can be traced in the graphics to the present, despite the reforms [Zavyalova, 2014]. This characteristic refers, first of all, to the nominations of the basic representations necessary for human life. So, for example, the considered semantic group includes 窗 ‘window’, which consists of the determinative 穴 ‘cave’ and the grapheme 囟 ‘hole’, their combination literally means a skylight in a cave as a skylight in a house, which transmits light. Consequently, the object as a holonym of the class to which this sign can be assigned can also serve as a motivational basis for the graphic designations of parts of buildings in Chinese writing.

The semantic group “Nominations of transport” included units naming objects intended for the transportation (艇 ‘boat’, 橇 ‘sleigh’, 船 ‘boat’). In accordance with the peculiarities of the functioning of certain items, the names of which form this group, three subgroups can be distinguished in it: the nominations of air, land and water transport. The most common determinative in this semantic group is the categorizer 车 ‘cart (transport)’, which indicates the choice, first of all, of a categorical feature as a motivational basis for the signs of this group. Initially, the character 车 ‘cart (transport)’ was depicted with a vertical line in the center, which displayed a shaft — one of two round poles fixed on the front axle of the carriage and connected to the arc that serve to harness the horse. Circles on both sides in the lower part pictograms are wheels; the horizontal one, passing through the wheels, is the axle, and the short horizontal protrusions at the end of each axle are checks — parts of the wagon that hold the wheels on the axle. The original meaning is a vehicle for movement on land on wheels [Sharavyova, 2020].

The main determinatives representing this group can also include the determinative 舟 ‘boat’, which denotes water types of vehicles and, accordingly, is part of such characters as 艇 ‘boat’, 船 ‘boat’ etc. The units of this semantic groups can also contain determinative “material”, but the percentage of indicators for this category will be much lower. The semantic group “Nominations of parts of vehicles” is represented by units that designate parts and accessories to vehicles: 舵 ‘rudder’, 轮 ‘wheel’, 帆 ‘sail’, 锚 ‘anchor’. Motivating signs for the writing of these meronymic nominations are the holonymic objects 舟 ‘boat’ and 车 ‘cart (transport)’ or ‘material’ (see 锚 ‘anchor’ (metal)).

A similar trend in the choice of a determinative-categorizer is also characteristic of the nominations of the semantic group “Phytonyms”,

which included the names of objects of the real world that were created by nature itself without human intervention, mainly these are the names of the building components of plants and wildlife in general (树 'tree' (tree), 茎 'stem' (grass), 葉 'leaf' (tree), etc.).

The semantic group "Nominations of weapons" includes the names of devices and objects that are structurally intended for attack or defense, for example, 劍 'sword', 刃 'blade', 箭 'arrow', etc. Most of the presented character nominations are motivated by the object, suggesting the presence of a sharp part that forms the basis of its function (劍 'sword' (knife)). At the same time, "material" can also act as a motivational feature, for example, 箭 'arrow' (bamboo).

The semantic group "Nominations of food products" was made up of objects naming products that in reality occupy a certain volume in space, having internal integrity, conservatism of form and correlation with the semantics of the number. These are, for example, such characters as 餅 'cake', 茄 'eggplant', 李 'plum', 蛋 'egg' and many others. A significant proportion of the designations of produced secondary products are motivated by a categorical feature and contain, respectively, the determinative 食 'food' in their writing (see 餅 'cake; pancake', 饅 'bun', 餡 'candy'). At the same time, individual designations can be motivated by other signs, for example, "material" (see 糕 (determinative "rice") or "object" (蛋 'egg' (animal)). It should be noted that character signs of fruits and vegetables, the original semantics of which is associated primarily with the need to nominate plant fruits, include determinatives representing holonyms of a partitive connection, for example, 茄 'eggplant' (grass), 李 'plum' (tree), etc.

The semantic group "Nominations of writing objects" includes the names of products and accessories used for correspondence and paperwork, study, creativity, for example, 筆 'pen'. The traditional spelling of this character 筆 originally meant a brush made from animal hair and a bamboo stick. The upper part of the character is the determinative "bamboo" (竹); the lower part of the 聿 resembles a hand holding a bamboo pen. The creation of this hieroglyphic sign is motivated, therefore, by the material of manufacture of this writing object — wool and bamboo.

Character-nominations of sports equipment are units that include sports equipment, devices, mechanical and electronic means, the use of which is provided for by the rules of competition in certain sports, for example 棋 'chess'. Motivational features, which are the basis for the graphic display of objects of this type, can be "material" (棋 'chess' (wood)) or "shape" (盔 'helmet' (pan)). Some of the designations are the result of semantic derivation (拍 'racquet', 球 'ball').

Due either to the specific features of the object or the historical characteristics of the object in some cases different motivational signs are chosen to designate one concept. For example, material and function. The nomination 鞞 ‘ball’ is interchangeable with another designation — 毬 ‘ball’. In this case, the determinants 皮 ‘skin’ and 毛 ‘wool’ are variable. According to Chinese lexicographic sources, 毬 refers to an ancient type of leather ball stuffed with wool, which was hit with a stick or kicked. The cognitive basis is the “material”, but the representatives are different, on the one hand, 皮 ‘skin’ — the external structure of the ball, is more general, since it can be filled inside with any substance, while 毛 ‘wool’ characterizes a certain type of ball. A kind of hyper-hyponymic connection arises, where the choice of a determinative is made either by a general or a particular concept. Similar situation arises when considering the pair of signs 躡-鞞, where the determinatives 足 ‘foot’ and 革 ‘skin’ can be used in the graphics in the meaning of “ball”. Therefore, the choice of a semantic component may be determined by the specifics of the named concept (a ball stuffed with wool; a ball made of leather) or its function, in which case the choice of the determinative is based on the knowledge of what the object is intended for and how to use it. On the other hand, the desire more accurately define the specific feature and indicate in the graph a more specific representation leads to similar nominations with other meanings, cf., for example, 骸 ‘bone stuck in the throat’ (determinative 骨 ‘bone’) and 鯁 ‘fish bone’ (determinative 鱼 ‘fish’).

## Conclusion

Thus, the choice of a determinative of complex character sign of the Chinese language with object semantics is determined by the relevance of the material as the most significant historically or functionally characteristic of the described representation of objects that are spatially limited, can be identified and counted. The evolution and development of the basic graphemes of Chinese writing at the same time determine the relevance of other motivational features (category, form, object), as well as their different frequency within different semantic groups of complex signs with object semantics. Since (as the material of the study showed) different determinatives can become “representatives” of one motivational feature, even in the field of nomination of the same representation, it can be concluded that the semantic components of complex signs of Chinese writing are not just indicators of the semantic area, but also become the means of conveying connotative evaluative shades of meaning, territorial and specific varieties, as well as historical features of certain concepts.

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