The Lingering Puzzle of Yán 焉:  
A Problem of Oral Language in the Chinese Reading Tradition*  

David Prager Branner  
City College of New York  
and Institute for Advanced Study  

Graphic motivation of the character 焉 has long been obscure, though the underlying words have been much discussed as contractions. It is proposed that neither of the underlying words is a true contraction, and the most economical explanation given current evidence is that the graph’s structure is a purely semantic ligature or “portmanteau.”  

Key words: graphic motivation, yan 焉, George A. Kennedy (1901-60), contraction, ligature, “portmanteau” graph, Wènxiàn covenant texts  

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賴著不走的「焉」字問題：
口語、字讀必分之一例

林德威
紐約市立學院
兼 普林斯頓高等研究院

長期以來，「焉」字的構字原則雖不甚清楚，但近代學者多認為其所包含的兩個語素（yān、yán）為合音。本文主張這兩個語素都不是真正的合音。從現有的證據看來，對「焉」字的構造最經濟的解釋是，它純粹是非會意非合音的合文。

關鍵詞：構字原則，「焉」字，金守拙，合音，合文，非會意非合音的合文，溫縣盟書