

— FUN WITH — CHINESE CHARACTERS

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INTRODUCTION

The genesis of the Chinese script is lengthy and remote. Very little of its history and origin is known to us as there is a lack of documentary evidence. Of the various legends concerning the creation of the Chinese script, the comparatively acceptable legend says that it was Cāng Jí 蚯鑒, a minister of the Emperor Huáng Dì 黃帝, who first invented the script. It was the outcome of an extraordinary occasion on which Cāng Jí observed the footprints of birds and beasts whose lines and shapes were distinct and discernible. Deeply inspired by the sight of this, he then drew the pictures of the objects in accordance with their shapes and forms. These pictures of the primitive age were further reduced to the essentials, conventionalized and in time highly stylized. In other words, they were reduced for the sake of simplicity to a few lines. These picture characters were often, especially in their archaic forms, very expressive and were called xiàng xíng 象形, literally "image shapes" by the Han lexicographer Xǔ Shèn 许慎 (30A.D.–124A.D.); or "pictography" by many a contemporary paleographer. In some cases, however, the so called "picture characters" were distorted beyond recognition. It is understandable that concrete objects such as phenomena of nature, man and his attributes, animals and plants, tools and implements and so forth are easily drawn and admirably adapted to represent language. Here are some examples:

For representation of phenomena of nature, there were such pictographs as rì “sun” 日 日, yuè “moon” 月 月, the older the forms of the characters, the closer the resemblance between the characters and the objects. The characters shuǐ “water” 水 (also abbreviated as three drops of water 氵 when it functions as a determinative) and chuān “stream, river” 溪 溪 were drawn as flowing water in a stream or river. The character shān “mountain” 山 山 is a clear, faithful picture of a string of hills, and the same may be said of the character yǔ “rain” 雨 雨 which is expressed by drops of water falling from heaven.

A great number of pictographs relate to man and his attributes. The character rén “man” 人 人 was represented by a simple linear picture depicting a variety of manners in which a man might appear. For nǚ “woman” 女 女 and mǔ “mother” 母 母, there were picture characters depicting the humble, kneeling and gentle manners of the fair sex. The two dots on the body of the latter symbolized the breasts of a mother. There were picture characters which symbolized the eye “mù” 目 目, ear (ér) 耳 耳, hand (shǒu) 手 手 (also abbreviated as 扌 when functioning as a determinative) and mouth (kǒu) 口 口 etc.

The world of animals was also widely represented. We have such quadrupeds as hǔ “tiger” 虎, yáng “sheep” 羊, xiàng “elephant” 象, mǎ “horse” 馬 and chǒu “dog” 犬 (also abbreviated as 犭 when functioning as a determinative). As for birds, the script distinguishes between niǎo (ordinary bird) 鸟 and zhuī (short-tailed bird) 雉. In addition, there was yet another picture, wū “crow” 鸦, with the omission of a dot from the head of an ordinary bird.

There were pictographs that denote plants and fruits. For instance, mù (tree) 木 highlighted the branches and roots of a tree; cǎo (grass) 草 depicted the upward shooting of buds, while zhú (bamboo) 竹 described the dangling leaves of a bamboo tree; guǒ (fruit) 果 was a picture of the tree that bore fruit. So was the picture character mǐ (rice) 穀 depicting grains of rice on top of a plant.

There were numerous pictures which bore witness to the growth of civilization in ancient China. Take a look at the characters for tools and implements; for instance, dāo (knife) 刀, chē (cart, chariot) 车, zhou (broom) 扫, míng (bowl) 盆, hú (wine vessel) 盒, yú (spirit vessel) 酒, cè (document, book) 箕, yù (brush) 毛 and wǎng (net) 网 (abbreviated as 网) and so on.

The pictographs, which were to a certain extent comparable with the hieroglyphic characters, later evolved into the kind of characters which Xu Shèn called “zhǐ shì” 指事, literally “pointing to matters”. In the West it was variously called “indirect symbols” or “indicative symbols”. Whatever term philologists might call them, these characters were ingeniously adapted by early inventors to render abstract ideas. As a result, the scope of Chinese script was further widened.

The methods of creating such ideographs were many: the drawing of a meaningful symbol, the addition of a sign to a pictograph, making parts stand for wholes, attributes for things, effects for causes, instruments for activities, gestures for actions, to mention just a few. In a nutshell, the abstract ideas were rendered in a metaphorical or symbolic way. For example, by drawing one line: —, two lines: ==, three lines: === or four lines: ===== (this ideograph is no longer in use now) the early inventors meant yī (one), èr (two), sān (three) or sì (four) respectively. By adding a dot or a line onto the horizontal line: 一 二 三 一 (now 上) or below it: 一 二 三 一 (now 下), he meant shàng (up, above) or xià (down, below) respectively. Similarly, by adding a stroke to the top of the pictograph “木” tree (一 + 木 = 末), or to the lower part of it (一 + 木 = 本), he meant mò (top branches, end of a branch) or běn (root, trunk) respectively.

While a horizontal stroke stood for yī (one), a vertical stroke | was then taken to mean shí (ten). It was later corrupted into †. A vertical line down the centre of a circle signified zhōng (centre, the middle) 中. A hand drawing a bow and arrow, needless to illuminate, meant shè (to shoot with a bow) 射. Similarly, to thrust at a person with a spear could but mean fá (to attack) 戟. A man with crossed legs symbolized the notion of jiāo (to cross, connection) 交; so did the picture of a standing man unmistakably represent the idea of lì (to stand) 立.

As civilization advanced, rapid social changes took place. Things became so complicated that the hieroglyphic characters or the ideographs could no longer suffice for the expression of massive abstract notions. Just as the proverb said, "Necessity is the mother of invention", a kind of phonetic script, called "xíng shēng" 形声 by Xǔ Shèn, or better known as "determinative-phonetic characters", was invented. The method of inventing determinative-phonetic characters was quite simple and yet most ingenious that the Chinese scribes could and still can invent new characters in unlimited numbers. Because of this, the growth of Chinese script had never been so rapid and before long the determinative-phonetic characters excelled the pictographs and the ideographs in rendering the language and thereafter they became the dominant class of characters in the Chinese script. The evolution of the Chinese script to this stage could be regarded as complete, and almost all the existing Chinese characters, except for five per cent or so, are of this sort.

This new method of creation might be viewed as a kind of phonetic writing which must, however, not be taken for an alphabetic script. It was simply the combination of a determinative indicating or suggesting the sense of the word and a phonetic indicating or suggesting the pronunciation of the word. The following examples will serve to explain how this simple, convenient and progressive method works:

| Determinative | Phonetic | Compound |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| 水 shuǐ (water; abbrev. 氵) | + ㄑ qí (his, her, its, this, that; originally winnowing basket, now 穂) | = 河 qí (the River Qí) |
| 玉 yù (jade; abbrev. 玉) | + ㄑ qí | = 玉 qí (a valuable white stone or gem) |
| 木 mù (tree; wood) | + ㄑ qí | = 棋 qí (Chinese chess) |

石 shí (stone)

+ 其 qí = 磐 qí (another variant of 棋 which was made of stone)

馬 mǎ (horse)

+ 其 qí = 駒 qí (a piebald horse)

鹿 lù (deer)

+ 其 qí = 麟 qí (a fabulous, auspicious animal)

鳥 niaǒ (bird)

+ 其 qí = 鳥 qí (a kind of wild goose)

月 yuè (moon; time)

{ + 其 qí = 期 qí (a period of time; a fixed date;
expect to)

欠 qiàn (owe; deficient)

+ 其 jī = 欺 qī (to cheat; to oppress)

心 xīn (heart)

+ 其 jī = 恨 jìn (to poison; to hate)

土 tǔ (earth; land; ground)

+ 其 jī = 基 jī (foundation; base)

竹 zhú (bamboo; abbrev. 竹)

+ 其 jī = 箕 jī (a winnowing basket)

艸 cǎo (grass; abbrev. 艹
now 草)

{ + 其 jī = 莖 jī (a kind of grass)
+ 其 qí = 莖 qí (the stem of bean)

示 shì (an omen; to manifest;
abbrev. 示)

+ 其 qí = 祢 qí (fortunate; lucky)

糸 mì (the archaic form
of 纟 silk)

+ 其 qí = 素 qí (dark grey; superlative)

蟲 chóng (worm; abbrev. 虫)

+ 其 qí = 蟒 qí (part of the word 蟑螂 which is
a kind of crab)

+ 其 qí, jī or jì =

The examples cited above were a series of words with the same (or approximately the same) pronunciation that could be written down with no possibility of confusion or misunderstanding at all. Thus 其 qí or jī or jì is always a phonetic, never a determinative in a compound word, though it is also the character representing such words as his, her, its, their, this, that, etc., in its own right. We may cite another series of examples in which the character 木 mù (wood) is nearly always a determinative of a compound word showing that almost all the words, which amount to 1,585 included in the largest Chinese dictionary, have something to do with wood:

| Determinative | Phonetic | Compound |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| 木 mù (wood) | + ㄆ bo (final particle) | = 柏 pò (a kind of oak: Quercus dentata; also the simplified form of 檉) |
| | + ㄆ bo (final particle) | = 柏 pō (an old knife-shaped weapon) |
| | + ㄆ bǔ (to divine; to foretell) | = 柏 pú (simple and plain) |
| 木 mù (wood) | + 土 tǔ (earth; land; ground) | = 杜 dù (the russet pear; to shut out; to stop; to prevent) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 扌 fǎn (to turn over; to rebel; to turn back) | | = 板 bǎn (board; blocks for printing) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 木 mù (wood) | | = 林 lín (forest; grove; copse) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 公 gōng (public; open to all) | | = 松 sōng (the pine tree; loose) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 同 tóng (together; same; alike; and; with) | | = 桃 tóng (a name applied to various trees e.g. sterculia platanifolia) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 亼 měi (each; every) | | = 梅 méi (plums; prunes) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 票 piào (warrant; bill; ticket) | | = 标 biāo (mark; beacon; signal; flag; notice) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 黄 huáng (yellow) | | = 橙 héng (crosswise; horizontal; side way) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 匱 guì (cupboard; wardrobe) | | = 櫃 guì (cupboard; wardrobe; shop-counter) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 閂 lán (door-screen) | | = 栅 lán (railing; animals' pen) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 蓝 guàn (heron; small cup) | | = 桓 quán (weight; power; authority) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 瞰 lǎn (look; inspect) | | = 檻 lǎn (the Chinese olive) |
| 木 mù (wood) + 登 dēng (to rise; to mount) | | = 檳 chéng (orange) |

A further 1,550 such examples may be added to the list, if we wish, of which the character 木 mù is always a determinative though it is the pictograph for wood itself. Furthermore, 木 mù can also function as a phonetic in the compound 洗 mù (to wash; to bathe; to cleanse; to enrich by kindness; to receive favours; etc.). Hence, apart from the fact that every pictograph and ideograph can be used as a phonetic, certain such pictures and symbols can be determinative as well. Since the number of determinatives was comparatively small, a radical system was devised to use the determinatives as a convenient means of classifying the characters in dictionaries. The first great dictionary *Shùo Wén Jiě Zì* 说文解字 of Xǔ Shèn, which was completed in 121 A.D., recognized 540 radicals, or 部首 bù shǒu, in all. This number remained unchanged until the imperial dictionary *Kāng Xī Zì Diǎn* 康熙字典 of the Ching Dynasty (1644 A.D.–1911 A.D.) reduced it to 214, at which they still remain today.

As time went on, the Chinese language, as with all other languages, underwent gradual changes. The phonetical change, in particular, of the language was so great that sound combinations which started almost identical and so could be fairly represented by the same phonetic became entirely unlike in the course of time. A typical example was the common phonetic 工 gōng (work; originally a picture of a carpenter's square) in the following determinative-phonetic characters: 力 gōng (merit; det. 力 lì “strength”), 爭 hòng (dispute; det. 爭 yán “talk”), 红 hóng (red; det. 红 mì “silk”), 扛 gāng (to carry; det. 扌 shǒu “hand”), 桶 gāng (bench; det. 木 mù “wood”), 江 jiāng (river; det. 氵 shuǐ “water”) and 貔 gòng (tribute; det. 貔 bei “shell, money”) etc. They are hardly homophonous in modern Chinese even though they originally have one and the same sound. In particular, the cases of 扛 gāng, 桶 gāng, and 江 jiāng are even worse, for there is no similarity at all between the sound of the phonetic and that of the compound character.

Such are the primary structural methods of Chinese script which generally falls into three main categories in nature, namely pictographs, ideographs and determinative-phonetic characters described above. We may therefore call them 三書 sān-shū (three categories of script) instead of 六書 liù-shū (six categories of script) which were distinguished first by Liú Xīn 劉歆 and Xǔ Shèn in the latter Han Dynasty (25 A.D.–220 A.D.). As for the other three types of characters, namely 會意 huì yì, literally “meeting of ideas” (associative compounds or logical compounds), 轉注 zhuǎn zhù, literally “transferable meaning” (mutually interpretative symbols) and 借借 jiǎ jiè, literally “borrowing” (phonetic loan characters), they were classified neither in accordance with the structure nor with the nature, but with the usage of the characters.

Take the *huì yì*, associative compounds or logical compounds for instance, it is a sheer significant combination of two or more pictographs or ideographs so as to form a new character representing a new idea. Thus, 明 míng “bright” consists of the pictographs of 日 *rì* “sun” and 月 *yuè* “moon” (日 + 月 = 明); 鮮 xiān “fresh” consists of the pictographs of 鱼 *yú* “fish” and 羊 *yáng* “sheep” (鱼 + 羊 = 鮮); 好 hǎo “good; to love” consists of the signs for 女 *nǚ* “woman” and 子 *zǐ* “child” (女 + 子 = 好); 歪 wāi “awry; slanting” is a combination of the signs for 不 *bù* “not” and 正 zhèng “upright” (不 put on top of 正=歪); 尖 jiān “sharp point; tapering” is a combination of the signs for 小 *xiao* “small” and 大 *dà* “big” (小 put on top of 大=尖). Very interesting and expressive are such logical compound characters as 桑 sāng “mulberry tree” where many hands (扌) are picking leaves of a tree (木), and 男 nán “man” which shows someone employing his strength (力) in the fields (田) as opposed to 安 ān “peace; safety” which is the feeling of a woman (女) staying at home (宀). All these associative compounds differ from the determinative-phonetic characters in that the “resulting” sound of the compound has no relationship with the sound of any of the elements in the combination. The following set of equations may well serve to show the difference:

Huì Yì, Associative Compound

$$日 + 月 = \text{明}$$

Xíng Shēng, Determinative-Phonetic Character

$$木 + 旗 = \text{旗}$$

A small category of Chinese characters whose significance has been very much debated is the so called *zhuǎn zhù* or mutually interpretative symbols. Apart from having the same determinative or 扌 shǒu 手, these mutually interpretative symbols are synonymous in meaning and can be substituted for each other. This is a way of usage, not a method of structure, however. In reality, these characters consist of one indicator of sense i.e., the determinative and one indicator of sound i.e., the phonetic. Structurally, they belong to the determinative-phonetic characters.

The remaining category of Chinese characters, which is more or less a kind of phonetic characters, is known as *jiǎ jiè* or loan characters. As the term implies, this is not a structural classification either, but another way of linguistic usage. The method was as simple as to borrow the existing character of a homophonous word. For example, at the very inception of invention, there was no such character for the word lái “come”, an idea difficult to depict. However, there had already been in existence a pictograph for a cereal plant 禾 穀 稗 which homophonously sounded as lái. So the ancient

scribes did a very easy and convenient task by borrowing the existent character 来 lái for the representation of the word lái “to come”. Similarly, the pictograph 蟒 wàn “scorpion” was borrowed to represent the word wàn “ten thousand”. 箕 箕 其 qí “a winnowing basket” was borrowed to represent the word qí meaning “his”, “her”, “its”, “their”, “this” and “that”. A very interesting example is the word xi “west”, represented by this picture character 雀 雀 西 which originally meant that the bird was in the nest. Xǔ Shèn’s reason for such a loan was that the bird rested in its nest at a time when the sun was setting in the west. It had therefore been borrowed to render the word xi “west”. All these transferences occurred because they were homophones.

In short, the Chinese script can be structurally grouped into three categories, namely pictographs, ideographs and determinative-phonetic characters.

What we have just described above is about the structural evolution of the Chinese script. The course of such evolution is lengthy, yet it may be divided into the following four stages:

1. **The Primitive Stage (or the Legendary Period):** this is the earliest stage of the Chinese script at which the pictographs originated from sheer pictures of objects. Although we have no direct archaeological evidence for this, Táng Lán 唐蘭 has nevertheless estimated that it must have been in existence for more than 10,000 years.

2. **The Archaic Stage (or the Pre-Historic Period):** this is the stage of the ideographs which covers a period from the emergence to the completion of the indirect symbols. We have not only good reasons to believe, but also documentary evidence to prove that this happened about 5,000 – 6,000 years ago.

3. **The Neo-Archaic Stage (or the Post-Historic Period):** this is the period of determinative-phonetic characters, which continued for a span of 1,600 years from the later Yīn Dynasty (1384 B.C. – 1112 B.C.) down to the Hán Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.). Almost all the materials of the ancient Chinese script that we now have belong to this long period. It was not only in this period that the Chinese script had completed its structural evolution, but towards the end of this stage, the Chinese script had gone through and finally completed its formal evolution as well.

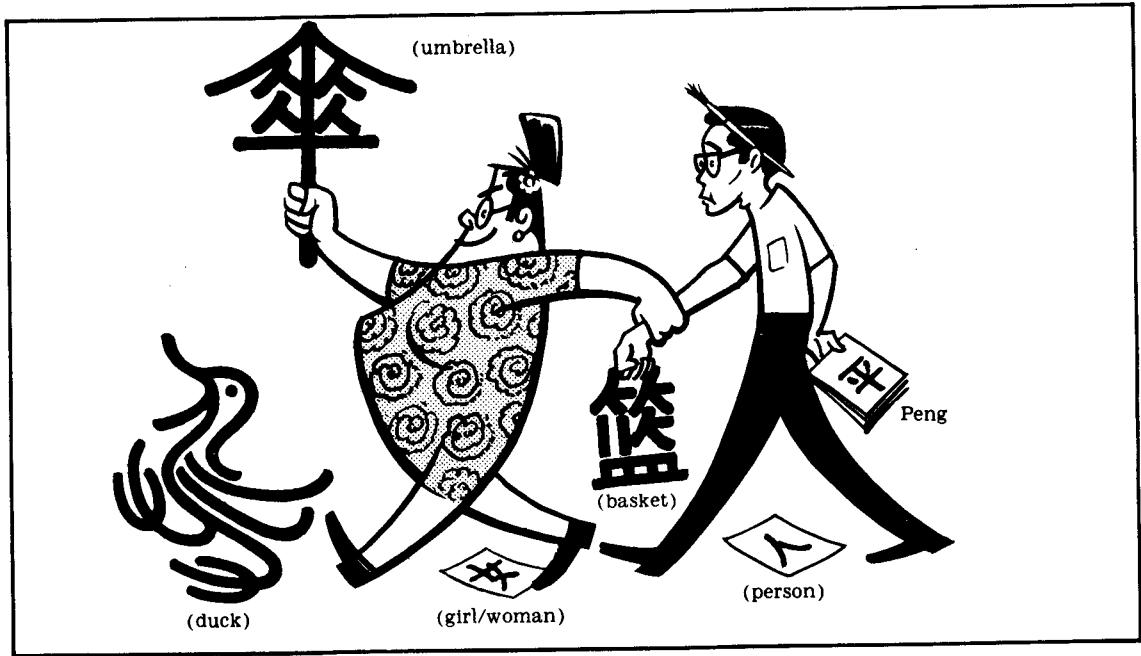
4. **The Contemporary Stage (or the Modern Period):**

As far as the development of the Chinese writing system is concerned, this is a stage of stability. Both the structural evolution and the formal changes could be said to have reached a state of perfection. Structurally, unlike the pictographs or the ideographs, the determinative-phonetic characters continued

to grow. Formally, however, after the appearance of the 楷書 kǎi shū (standard script), which is still the normal script form and the basis of the printing form used today, some time in the period of Wei and Jin Dynasties (221 A.D. – 580 A.D.), little formal changes had taken place ever since. It was not until the early 1950s that the Government of the People's Republic of China started to introduce a kind of simplified form for two thousand odd Chinese characters. This was done all for a very good cause of simplicity and convenience, but at a very handsome expense of damaging as well as distorting the beauty and logical structure of the Chinese script.

To sum up, the Chinese script had completed its structural evolution long before the beginning of the Western era. However, that does not mean that it ceased to grow thereafter. On the contrary, like the Chinese language it represents, it is a living as well as a metabolic system of writing, one of the most epoch-making inventions of mankind. Although many characters had become obsolete in the process of changes, new characters could be easily and simultaneously created for any newly arisen mass of events, things or notions because the Chinese had discovered a simple, convenient means of creating new characters.

*Dr Ong Tee Wah
18 January 1980*



PREFACE

As a means of visual communication, Chinese written characters are fascinating in their ingenuity and originality. The earliest form of Chinese writing was **pictographic** – stylized pictures of objects. Graphic **symbols** supplemented pictographs to represent simple abstract thoughts. Later, for transmitting complex ideas, **ideographs** were created from already existing simple characters, conveying ideas by the juxtaposition of interchangeable elements.

To meet the demand for thousands of new characters, the Chinese resorted to **phonetic** or **harmonic** writing, relying on the radical for the sense and the phonetic for the sound.

Today, many complex characters have undergone **simplification** to facilitate writing by reducing the number of strokes.

Chinese characters are generally built up from 214 root characters or radical elements. These comprise the basic building blocks for innumerable compound characters. Some of these radicals or primitives are capable of standing independently as characters. Others function as components of compound characters. In combination, they assume variant or contracted forms. By understanding the basic meanings of the elements that form a character, it is possible to discern the significance of the whole character. Hence, the importance of studying the radicals.

This collection of cartoons introduces systematically the more commonly used radical elements and the compounds they build up, together with related or associated characters.

As a mnemonic aid, it analyses each character, tracing its evolutionary development from the original seal character to the regular and simplified forms.

Based on authoritative source materials, both Chinese and English, it draws inspiration from the lofty, yet down-to-earth, wit and wisdom of the Chinese mind. Above all, it takes an appreciative look at Chinese written characters through the imaginative and discerning eye of a cartoonist.

While every effort has been made to be as accurate as possible, strict precision of representation is by no means the overriding concern; for humour and delight has been given more than just an instrumental importance.

Originally published as a regular feature of The Straits Times Bilingual Page, it is now presented as a collection and an appetizer to introduce readers to the delightful and fascinating world of pictographs and ideographs.

Have fun, then, with Chinese characters!

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| 118 | 义 yì | 136 | 英 yīng | 154 | 半 bàn | 172 | 想 xiǎng |
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| 120 | 羨 xiàn | 138 | 笔 bì | 156 | 告 gào | 174 | 忘 wàng |
| 121 | 火 huǒ | 139 | 算 suàn | 157 | 牧 mù | 175 | 快 kuài |
| 122 | 炎 yán | 140 | 笑 xiào | 158 | 肉 ròu | 176 | 匆 cōng |



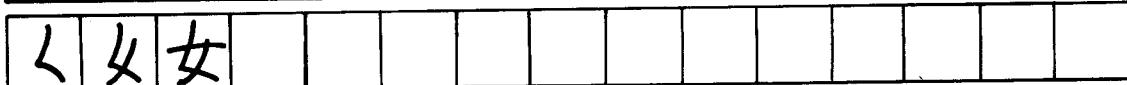
nǚ

woman;
girl;
daughter

The original pictograph for woman depicted her in a bowing position Apparently, for ease in writing, man reduced this to a humbler form – a woman kneeling down – but not for long. The modern version graphically portrays the big stride woman has taken to keep up with man.



PENG



| | | |
|----|----------|--------------|
| 女儿 | nǚ ér | daughter |
| 女工 | nǚ gōng | woman worker |
| 女皇 | nǚ huáng | empress |
| 女人 | nǚ rén | woman |
| 女士 | nǚ shì | lady |
| 女王 | nǚ wáng | queen |
| 女性 | nǚ xìng | the female |

| | | |
|-----|-------------|---------------|
| 女婿 | nǚ xù | son-in-law |
| 女子 | nǚ zǐ | girl or woman |
| 女朋友 | nǚ péng yǒu | girl friend |
| 女主角 | nǚ zhǔ jué | female lead |
| 女主人 | nǚ zhǔ rén | hostess |
| 妇女 | fù nǚ | woman |
| 子女 | zǐ nǚ | children |

Example:

我们 的 工 厂 有 很 多 女 工。

Wǒ men de gōng chǎng yǒu hěn duō nǚ gōng.

It means, "Our factory has many woman workers."

子

Zǐ

infant;
child;
son

This character for child originated from a representation of an infant with outstretched arms and legs. Eventually it was modified to one with legs swaddled in cloth bands. Evidently, to the Chinese parent, the secret of infant care lies in keeping one end wet and the other end dry.



PENG



子弹
子弟
子女
子孙

zǐ dàn
zǐ dì
zǐ nǚ
zǐ sūn

bullet
young generations
children
descendants

子夜
子音
子子孙孙
孩子

zǐ yè
zǐ yīn
zǐ zǐ sūn sūn
hái zǐ

midnight
consonant
descendants
child

Example:

这个孩子很聪明。

Zhè gè hái zǐ hěn cōng míng.

It means, "This child is very intelligent."

好

HÀO

good;
right;
excellent

Man combined 女 (girl or daughter) with 子 (child or son) to form a character for goodness and excellence. From experience he must have found his greatest good in the possession of a wife and a child or a son and a daughter. It is also good that his wife sticks to his child.



PENG

人 女 女 女 好 好

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|---------------------|------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 好吃 | hǎo chī | delicious | 好笑 | hǎo xiào | funny |
| 好处 | hǎo chù | benefit; advantage | 好心 | hǎo xīn | kind-hearted |
| 好感 | hǎo gǎn | good impression | 好意 | hǎo yì | well-intentioned |
| 好汉 | hǎo hàn | worthy man | 好在 | hǎo zài | fortunately; thanks to |
| 好久 | hǎo jiǔ | a long time | 好转 | hǎo zhuǎn | turn for the better |
| 好看 | hǎo kàn | good looking | 好人好事 | hǎo rén hǎo shì | good personalities and good deeds |
| 好听 | hǎo tīng | pleasant to the ear | | | |
| 好象 | hǎo xiàng | look alike | | | |

Example:

这首歌很好听。

Zhè shǒu gē hěn hǎo tīng.

It means, "This song is very pleasant to the ear."

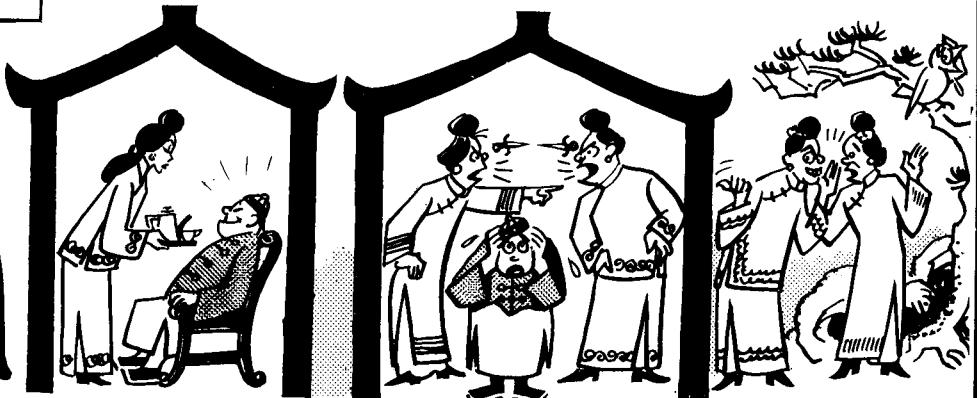
安

ĀN

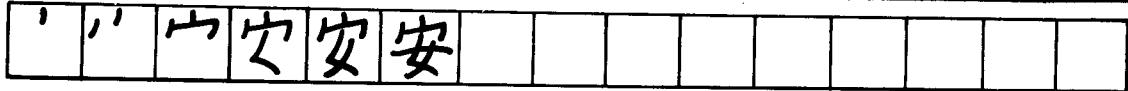
peace;
contentment

The character for peace and contentment is made up of woman (女) and roof (宀). Man conceived the idea that to attain peace he should have only one woman under the roof or confine her within the house.

居



PENG



安定

ān dìng

stable

安静

ān jìng

serene; quiet or
peaceful

安乐

ān lè

peace and
happiness

安眠

ān mián

sleep peacefully

安宁

ān níng

peaceful; free
from troubles

安排

ān pái

arrange

安全

ān quán

safe; secure

安慰

ān wèi

comfort; console

安心

ān xīn

feel at ease; free
from worries

安装

ān zhuāng

install; assemble

安分守己

ān fèn shǒu jǐ

law abiding; be
contented with
one's lot

安居乐业

ān jū lè yè

live and work in
contentment

不安

bù ān

uneasy; worried

Example:

用行人天桥过路最安全。

Yòng xíng rén tiān qiáo 'guò lù zuì ān quán.

It means, "The safest way to cross the road is to use an overhead bridge."



Zì

written
character

To preserve written characters from deterioration man transcribed them on bamboo bound into books. Such precious written words came to be cherished as a child (子) is cherished under a roof (屋). Hence 字: the written character.

Pictured here under the roof is a precious youthful character being preserved from deterioration.



PENG



| | | |
|----|---------|--------------------------|
| 字典 | zì diǎn | dictionary |
| 字号 | zì hào | name of shop |
| 字迹 | zì jī | handwriting |
| 字据 | zì jù | written receipt |
| 字句 | zì jù | words and expressions |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 字母 | zì mǔ | letter of an alphabet |
| 字幕 | zì mù | subtitle |
| 字体 | zì tǐ | style of calligraphy |
| 字里行间 | zì lǐ háng jiān | between the lines |
| 写字 | xiě zì | writing (words) |

Example:

他的字体很美。

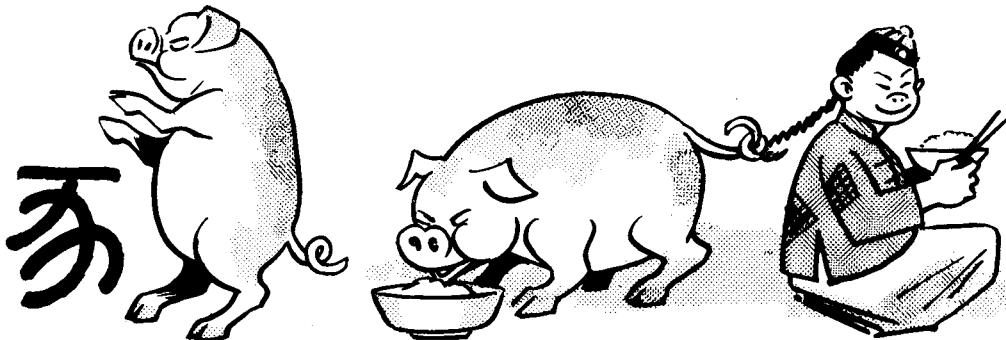
Tā de zì tǐ hěn měi.

It means, "His handwriting is very beautiful."

豕

shǐ
pig

In this pictograph of pig the head is replaced by a line (—). On the left are the belly and paws (豕) and on the right the back and tail (豕). The domestic pig might well symbolise prosperity to man, so closely knit and tied together were their lives. This interdependence probably gave rise to the proverbial saying: "The schoolmaster should not leave his books, nor the poor man his pig."



REIN

一 丂 丌 不 与 丏 丐 丒 丑 专 且 丕 世 丗 丘 丙 业 丛 东 丝

豕 (shǐ) is the literary term for pig and is practically obsolete. 猪 (zhū) is being used instead.

| | | |
|-----|------------|---------------|
| 猪排 | zhū pái | pork ribs |
| 猪肉 | zhū ròu | pork |
| 猪油 | zhū yóu | lard |
| 猪肝色 | zhū gān sè | maroon colour |
| 懒猪 | lǎn zhū | lazy pig |

Example:

回教徒不能吃猪肉。

Huí jiào tú bù néng chī zhū ròu.

It means, "Muslims cannot eat pork."

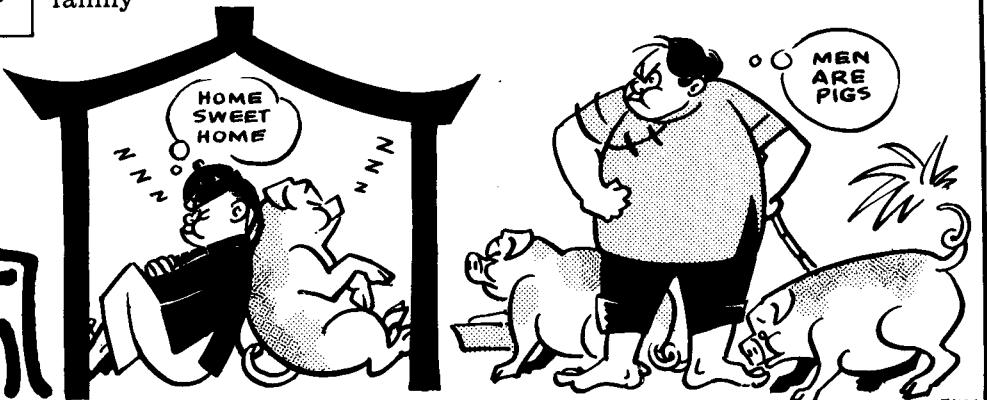
家

jiā

house;
family

A pig (豕) under the roof (宀) gave man his concept of home (家). Domesticated, the pig brought man no domestic trouble and was allowed freedom to wander about in the house.

豕



| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| 家 | 产 | 山 | 山 | 宇 | 宇 | 家 | 家 | 家 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|--------------------------------|------|--------------------|--|
| 家产 | jiā chǎn | family's property | 家园 | jiā yuán | native place; homeland |
| 家畜 | jiā chù | domestic animals; livestock | 家长 | jiā zhǎng | parents |
| 家具 | jiā jù | furniture | 家政 | jiā zhèng | domestic science; domestic affairs |
| 家眷 | jiā juàn | family (wife and children) | 家族 | jiā zú | clan or the family |
| 家庭 | jiā tíng | family; home | 家常便饭 | jiā cháng biàn fàn | ordinary meal |
| 家务 | jiā wù | household chores | 家家户户 | jiā jiā hù hù | every family |
| 家乡 | jiā xiāng | native place | 家破人亡 | jiā pò rén wáng | broken family and its members demised |
| | | | 家喻户晓 | jiā yù hù xiǎo | known to every household |

Example:

我有一个快乐的家庭。

Wǒ yǒu yī gè kuàilè de jiā tíng.

It means, "I have a happy family."

嫁

jià
to marry
a man

This character, derived by adding home (家) to woman (女), provides an incentive for a girl to marry. It applies only to woman who, in marriage, adds to her possessions a husband, a home and a family.



=



PENG

女 女 女 女 女 女 女 嫁 嫁 嫁 嫁 嫁

嫁娶
嫁人
嫁妆

jià qǔ
jià rén
jià zhāng

marriage
get married
trousseau

| 嫁祸于人
出嫁

jià huò yú rén
chū jià

put blame on
others
be married

Example:

自己做错事要承认，不要嫁祸于人。

Zì jǐ zuò cuò shì yào chéng rèn, bù yào jià huò yú rén.

It means, "One should admit one's mistakes and not put the blame on others."

妻

qī
wife

When man marries woman he puts a broom  into her hand , bestowing upon her the rulership of the house. Hence: 妻 a legal wife — one who wields the broom, using it to take care of house, home and husband. Here we see how a legal wife wields a broom to take care of a philandering husband whose only concern is to take care of illegal wives.



妻舅

qī jiù

brother-in-law

妻室

qī shì

legal wife

妻子

qī zǐ

wife

妻离子散

qī lí zǐ sàn

broken up

family

good wife

贤妻

xián qī

Example:

他有一个美丽的妻子。

Tā yǒu yí gè měi lì de qī zǐ.

It means, "He has a pretty wife."

木

mù
tree;
wood

This is a pictograph of a tree with its branches (一), trunk (丨) and roots (八). Only the trunk and branches are suggested because 木 also stands for wood. The 木 pictured here didn't stand very long though.



PENG

一 十 才 木

木板

mù bǎn

wooden plank or board

木材

mù cài

timber

木筏

mù fá

wooden raft

木工

mù gōng

carpentry

木瓜

mù guā

papaya

木屐

mù jī

clogs

木匠

mù jiàng

carpenter

木刻

mù kè

wood carving

木料

mù liào

timber; lumber

木偶戏

mù ǒu xì

puppet show

木炭

mù tàn

charcoal

木头

mù tóu

wooden block; wood

木星

Mù Xīng

Jupiter

木乃伊

mù nǎi yī

mummy

木已成舟

mù yǐ chéng zhōu

(wood has become a boat) What's done cannot be undone

麻木

má mù

numb

Example:

小英喜欢看木偶戏。

Xiao Ying xǐ huān kàn mù ǒu xì.

It means, "Xiao Ying likes to watch puppet shows."

李

lǐ

plum or plum tree;
also a Chinese surname

Owing to its prolific nature
and its popularity with children,
the plum tree came to be known
as the tree (木) the children (子)
are fond of. In this idealistic
ideograph children were located
under the tree, thus: 李.
This, unfortunately, has not
always been true in life.



李

PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 十 | 才 | 木 | 李 | 李 | 李 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | |
|-----|---------------|------------------|
| 李树 | lǐ shù | plum tree |
| 李子 | lǐ zi | plum |
| 行李 | xíng lì | baggage; luggage |
| 行李箱 | xíng lì xiāng | trunk |

Example:

去旅行，最好不要带太多行李。

Qù lǚ xíng, zuì hǎo bù yào dài tài duō xíng li.

It means, "When travelling, it is advisable not to bring along too many baggage."

棲（棲）

qī

to roost, perch or nest;
to live in poverty or
seek refuge

This character is built on tree (木) as radical and wife (妻) as phonetic. The tree provides the base and the wife supplies the sound. Man simplified it by putting in place of wife, the character for "west" (西).



PENG

| | | |
|----|---------|--------------------------|
| 栖身 | qī shēn | dwell; obtain shelter |
| 栖宿 | qī sù | rest for the night |

| | | |
|------|------------------|----------------|
| 栖息 | qī xī | rest |
| 栖身之所 | qī shēn zhī suǒ | dwelling-place |
| 两栖动物 | liǎng qī dòng wù | amphibians |

Example:

新加坡并不乏栖身之所。

Xīn Jiā Pō bīng bù quē qī shēn zhī suǒ .

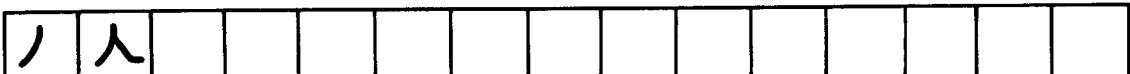
It means, "Singapore does not lack dwelling places."



réν

man;
person;
human

Man's pictographic profile presents an insight into his evolutionary development. Created from earth and equipped with hands and feet, lowly man eked out an existence from the ground with his hands 丂 to help him stand on his feet 丂. Discarding both hands and feet, he used only his head 丂. Today, in the race of the survival of the fittest, he loses his head completely 丂 and finds himself barely able to keep his feet.



| | | | | | |
|----|----------|--|------|------------------|---------------------------|
| 人才 | réν cái | men of talent | 人生 | réν shēng | the life of man |
| 人格 | réν gé | personality | 人为 | réν wéi | man-made |
| 人工 | réν gōng | artificial; man-made | 人物 | réν wù | personage; notable figure |
| 人口 | réν kǒu | population | 人行道 | réν xíng dào | pavement; sidewalk |
| 人类 | réν lèi | mankind | 人山人海 | réν shān rén hǎi | huge crowds of people |
| 人们 | réν mén | general term for a number of people; men | 行人 | xíng rén | pedestrian |
| 人民 | réν mǐn | people | | | |

Example:

在 裕 廊 飞 禽 公 园 有 一 个 人 工 瀑 布 。

Zài Yù Láng fēi qín gōng yuán yǒu yī gè rén gōng pù bù.

It means, "There is a man-made waterfall in Jurong Bird Park."



dà

big; great

The ideographic representation for “big” is simply a front elevation of a full-grown man with arms stretched out to the limit 大. What conveys the idea of “big” is not the size of the man but his demonstrative gesture. Some of the assortment of characters pictured below are trying to show what “big” means. Others are merely trying to show off.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 十 | 大 | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | |
|----|----------|------------------|
| 大胆 | dà dǎn | daring; bold |
| 大概 | dà gài | probably |
| 大家 | dà jiā | all (people) |
| 大批 | dà pī | in great numbers |
| 大人 | dà rén | adult |
| 大声 | dà shēng | loud voice |
| 大厦 | dà shà | big building |
| 大事 | dà shì | important matter |
| 大学 | dà xué | university |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 大选 | dà xuǎn | general election |
| 大约 | dà yuē | about |
| 大使馆 | dà shí guǎn | embassy |
| 大众化 | dà zhòng huà | popularized |
| 大自然 | dà zì rán | the world of nature |
| 大快人心 | dà kuài rén xīn | to the satisfaction of the masses |
| 大同小异 | dà tóng xiǎo yì | more or less the same |

Example:

小英很自大，所以人人都讨厌她。

Xiǎo Yǐng hěn zì dà, suǒ yǐ rén rén dōu tǎo yàn tā.

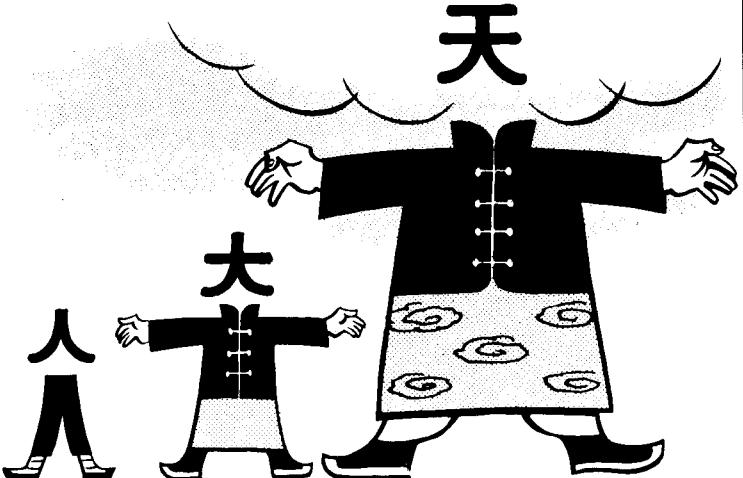
It means, “Xiao Ying is very conceited, so everyone dislikes her.”

天

tiān

heaven;
sky;
day

This stylised representation shows man's ability to stand on his feet (人), extending his arms egotistically (大). But high above man (人), be he ever so great (大), stretches the heavenly firmament (一), filling the empty space above his shoulders and directing his footsteps. Hence: 天, meaning heaven — man's rightful and authoritative head. Since the growing light of the sky ushers in the dawn of day, 天 came to mean also "day".



PENG

一 二 三 天

| | | |
|----|------------|-----------------------------|
| 天才 | tiān cái | genius |
| 天空 | tiān kōng | sky |
| 天亮 | tiān liàng | daylight; day-break |
| 天桥 | tiān qiáo | overpass (over-head bridge) |
| 天然 | tiān rán | natural (not artificial) |
| 天生 | tiān shēng | inborn |
| 天下 | tiān xià | the whole world |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 天真 | tiān zhēn | naive; innocent |
| 天资 | tiān zī | natural endowment |
| 天主教 | tiān zhǔ jiào | Roman Catholic |
| 天南地北 | tiān nán dì běi | far apart |
| 白天 | bái tiān | daytime |
| 明天 | míng tiān | tomorrow |
| 前天 | qián tiān | day before yesterday |
| 昨天 | zuó tiān | yesterday |

Example:

明 天 我 要 去 日 本 。

Míng tiān wǒ yào qù Rì Běn.

It means, "I am going to Japan tomorrow."

夫

fū

husband;
distinguished
person

夫夫夫

A youthful person (人), grown big (大) and attaining maturity at 20, used a hairpin (一) and was vested with the virile cap of manhood 夫. Given an honourable name, he was considered a distinguished person, qualified as a prospective husband. Hence 夫 means a distinguished person or husband.



PENG

一 二 夫 夫

农夫
懦夫
渔夫
丈夫

nóng fū
nuò fū
yú fū
zhàng fū

farmer
coward
fisherman
husband

夫妇
夫妻
夫人
大夫

fū fù
fū qī
fū rén
dài fū

husband and wife
husband and wife
wife; madam
medical doctor

Example:

小兰的丈夫是个农夫。

Xiao-lán de zhàng fū shì gè nóng fū.

It means, "Xiao-lan's husband is a farmer."

太

tài

too;
over;
excessive

By underscoring “big” (大) with a line (—) man came up with a superlative character (太) meaning too much or over the limit. In the ecstasy of double happiness and the rapture of marital bliss that followed, man bestowed upon his wife a flattering title: 太太 a double emphasis. As shown below, she took him seriously and lived up to it. Man thereafter reduced the underline to a teeny-weeny stroke 太

太
太
太



PENG

一
大
大
太

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|------------------|-----|---------------|---|
| 太多 | tài duō | too many | 太极拳 | tàijí quán | kind of traditional Chinese martial art |
| 太后 | tài hòu | empress dowager | 太空船 | tàikōng chuán | spaceship |
| 太监 | tài jiàn | eunuch | 太空人 | tàikōng rén | spaceman |
| 太空 | tài kōng | outer space; sky | 太平门 | tàipíng mén | emergency exit; safety exit |
| 太平 | tài píng | peace | 太平洋 | Tài Píng Yáng | Pacific Ocean |
| 太太 | tài tài | madam | 太阳能 | tài yáng néng | solar energy |
| 太阳 | tài yáng | sun | | | |
| 太子 | tài zǐ | prince | | | |

Example:

太空人已在月球登陆。

Tài kōng rén yǐ zài yuè qiú dēng lù.

It means, “The spaceman has already landed on the moon.”

立

lì
stand; rise up

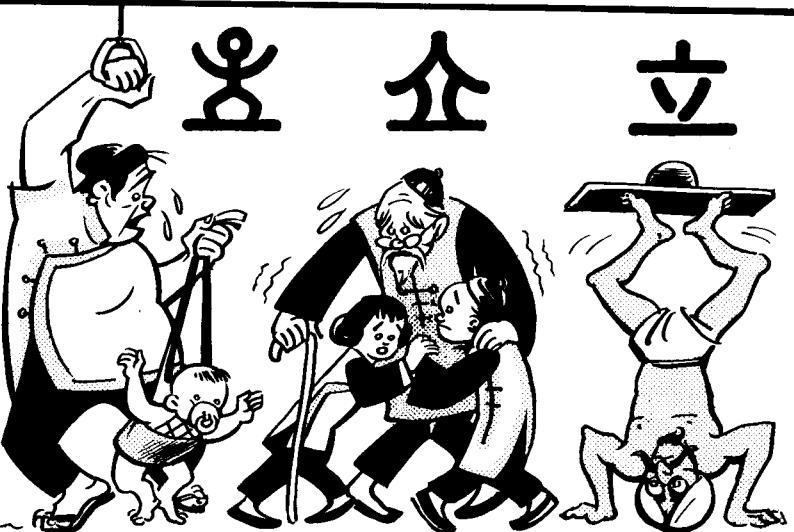
This character, meaning plain standing or rising up, portrays a person standing – not in the abstract, but on firm, stable ground (—). Originally written 積, it was modified to 立 and finally to 立. Illustrated here are some human characters, firm and infirm, trying to stand on stable ground and demonstrating that plain standing is not plain sailing.



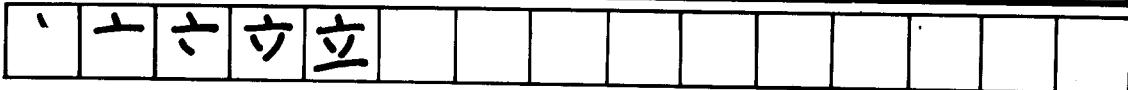
立

立

立



PENG



| | | | | | |
|----|----------|----------------------------------|----|----------|------------------------------------|
| 立场 | lì chǎng | standpoint; position | 立约 | lì yuē | enter into an agreement |
| 立法 | lì fǎ | legislation | 立正 | lì zhèng | attention! (army command) |
| 立功 | lì gōng | perform merito- rious service | 立志 | lì zhì | be determined (to do something) |
| 立即 | lì jí | at once; immediately | 立足 | lì zú | base oneself on |
| 立刻 | lì kè | immediately; instantly | 建立 | jiàn lì | establish; erect |
| 立体 | lì tǐ | three-dimensional | 设立 | shè lì | set up; establish |

Example:

我们 在 花 园 里 建 立 起 一 座 纪 念 碑。

Wǒ men zài huā yuán lǐ jiàn lì qǐ yī zuò jì niàn bēi.

It means, "We have erected a monument in the garden."

小

xiǎo

small;
petty;
young

A vertical stroke, (|), separating two little ones (ノヽ) gave man his concept of "small". The idea was also derived from the division (ノヽ) of an object (J) already small by its nature. To man, division (÷) makes small (小) and multiplication (X) makes big (大) a thing. Our illustration shows how to multiply happiness by dividing sorrow.

小

small



PENG



| | | | | | |
|----|------------|-----------------------|------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 小吃 | xiǎo chī | snacks | 小偷 | xiǎo tōu | thief |
| 小丑 | xiǎo chǒu | clown | 小心 | xiǎo xīn | careful; cautious |
| 小岛 | xiǎo dǎo | small island; islet | 小型 | xiǎo xíng | small scale |
| 小姐 | xiǎo jiě | lady; Miss | 小学 | xiǎo xué | primary school |
| 小麦 | xiǎo mài | wheat | 小组 | xiǎo zǔ | small team or group |
| 小声 | xiǎo shēng | low voice; whisper | 小题大作 | xiǎo tí dà zuò | make a mountain out of a molehill |
| 小时 | xiǎo shí | hour | | | |

Example:

我 喜 欢 巴 金 的 小 说 。

Wǒ xǐ huān Bā-jin de xiǎo shuō.

It means, "I like Ba Jin's novels."

少

shǎo

less; few;
short of

This character combines 小 with 少 to form 少. It means to cut smaller or diminish (少) that which is already small (小), thus making it less (少). To cut short the diminishing process, the method suggested below is an effective short cut to reduce big (大) to small (小) and small (少) to less (少).



PENG



| | | |
|----|------------|------------------------|
| 少妇 | shào fù | young married woman |
| 少量 | shǎo liàng | small quantity |
| 少年 | shào nián | teenager; youngster |
| 少女 | shào nǚ | young girl |
| 少数 | shǎo shù | minority |
| 少许 | shǎo xǔ | little; few |
| 少有 | shǎo yǒu | rare; scarce; |

| | | |
|------|--------------------|---|
| 少壮 | shào zhuàng | youthful and strong |
| 少不了 | shǎo bù liǎo | indispensable |
| 少见多怪 | shǎo jiàn duō guài | things appear strange to the unfamiliar |
| 少数民族 | shǎo shù mǐn zú | ethnic minority |
| 多少 | duō shǎo | how many; how much |

Example:

这位少女真美丽。

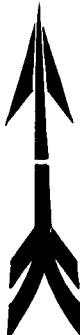
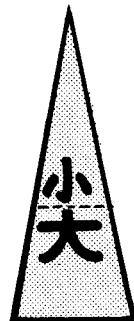
Zhè wèi shào nǚ zhēn měi lì.

It means, "This young lady is beautiful indeed."

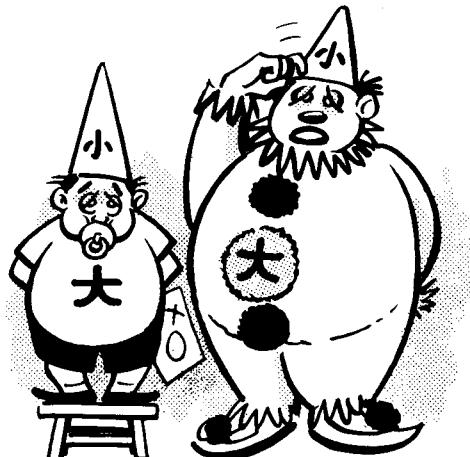


jiān

pointed;
sharp



By placing small (小) on top of big (大) man came up with an ideograph to describe anything that tapers from big to small. Hence: 尖, meaning pointed or sharp or, figuratively, sharp-witted. But not all objects which are small at the top and big at the bottom are sharp or sharp-witted, as the examples on the right prove.



24

𠂇 小 小 尘 尖

| | | |
|----|-----------|---------------|
| 尖兵 | jīān bīng | vanguard |
| 尖刀 | jīān dāo | sharp knife |
| 尖顶 | jīān dǐng | peak; apex |
| 尖端 | jīān duān | highest point |

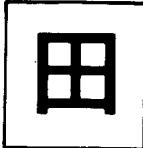
| | | |
|----|----------|------------------------------|
| 尖刻 | jīan kè | trenchant (of words; speech) |
| 尖利 | jīan lì | sharp |
| 尖锐 | jīan ruì | sharp; pointed |
| 尖塔 | jīan tǎ | spire |

Example:

这是一把尖锐的刀。

Zhè shì yī bǎ jiān ruì de dāo.

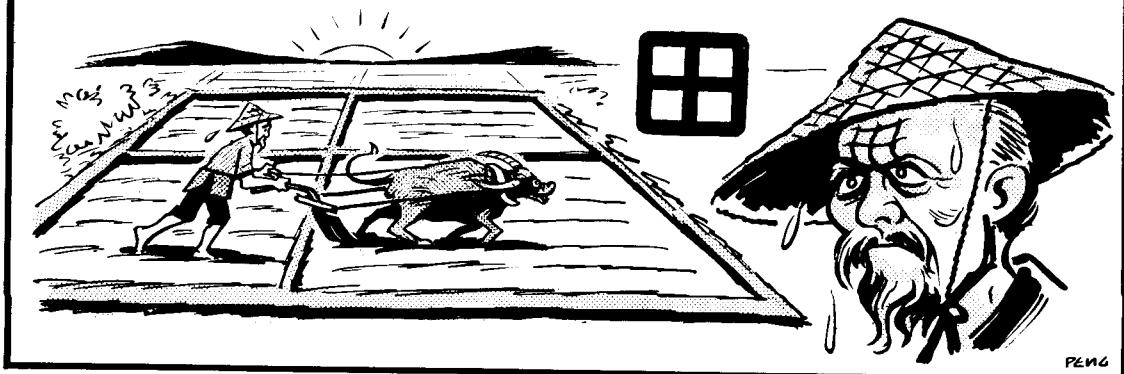
It means, "This is a sharp knife."



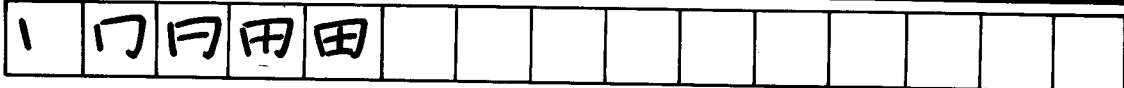
tián

rice field;
grain field

From dawn to dusk man toiled in the field, taking to heart the proverbial saying: "Never leave your field in spring or your house in winter." The character he shaped for "field" was a pictograph of a ploughed field with furrows and cross-paths: 田. By the sweat of his brow he reaped the fruits of his labour. But all that toil has left its mark of furrows and cross-paths, not only on the field, but also indelibly on his brow.



PENG



田地

tián dì

field or situation
(of something)

田鸡

tián jī

frog

田径

tián jìng

track and field

田野

tián yě

open country

田园

田径赛

耕田

tián yuán

tián jìng bài

gēng tián

fields and gardens

athletic
competition

plough

Example:

一年一度的田径赛又将来临了。

Yī nián yī dù de tián jìng bài yòu jiāng lái lín le.

It means, "The annual athletic competition is round the corner again."

力

lì
strength;
force;
power

In the original form (力) the long middle line (丨), curved at the top to take less room, represents the sinew that binds muscle to bone. The other line (一) pictures the fibrous sheath of the sinew.

The modern version (力) is a powerful graphic impression of the forearm with muscles in tension — a symbol of strength. We present here muscles in action as demonstrated by a really strong character, one who is far from sinewy.



PENG



| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 力量 | lì liàng | physical strength; force | 力不从心 | lì bù cóng xīn | ability falling short of one's wishes |
| 力气 | lì qì | effort; strength | 力求进步 | lì qiú jìn bù | struggle for improvement |
| 力求 | lì qiú | strive; make every effort | 力争上游 | lì zhēng shàng yóu | aim high |
| 力争 | lì zhēng | endeavour; fight for | 人力 | rén lì | labour force; manpower |

Example:

团结就是力量。

Tuán jié jiù shì lì liàng.

It means, "Unity is strength."

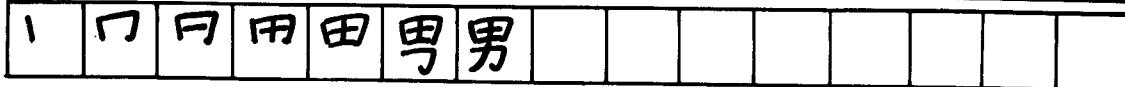


nán
man;
male;
masculine

A field (田), where strength (力) is exerted, is the symbol for "masculine" man 男, the male of the human species. This is probably because the home is where the female of the same species exerts her strength. Our picture shows strength being exerted — by the male (男) in field-work, the female (女) in housework, and their offspring (子) in promotional work.



PENG



男孩
男女
男人
男声
男性
男装

nán hái
nán nǚ
nán rén
nán shēng
nán xìng
nán zhuāng

boy
men and women
man
male voice
male
male attire

男子
男朋友
男子汉
男男女女
男女平等

nán zǐ
nán péng yǒu
nán zǐ hàn
nán nán nǚ nǚ
nán nǚ píng děng

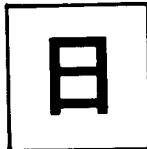
man; male
boy friend
man; hero
men and women
equality of men
and women

Example:

很多好厨师都是男性。

Hěn duō hǎo chú shī dōu shì nán xìng.

It means, "Many good chefs are males."



rì

sun;
day



The sun was first depicted as a circle with an "eye" or centre and rays extending to the corners of the earth ☉. This was simplified to ☺, then modified: ☻, and finally squared off: 日. Just as surely as its rising and setting mark the "day" (日) for man, the sun's shining upon the wicked as well as the good demonstrates that it sees the whole world with one eye.



PENG



| | | |
|----|-------------|--------------------|
| 日报 | rì bào | daily newspaper |
| 日本 | Rì Běn | Japan |
| 日常 | rì cháng | daily; usual |
| 日出 | rì chū | sunrise |
| 日光 | rì guāng | sunshine |
| 日记 | rì jì | diary |
| 日历 | rì lì | calendar |
| 日期 | rì qī | date |
| 日蚀 | rì shí(shi) | eclipse of the sun |

| | | |
|------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 日薪 | rì xīn | daily wages |
| 日夜 | rì yè | day and night |
| 日子 | rì zǐ | day; life |
| 日光浴 | rì guāng yù | sun bath |
| 日内瓦 | Rì Nèi Wǎ | Geneva |
| 日用品 | rì yòng pǐn | daily necessities |
| 日常生活 | rì cháng shēng huó | daily life |
| 日以继夜 | rì yǐ jì yè | day and night; non-stop |

Example:

我明天要上山顶看日出。

Wǒ míng tiān yào shàng shān dǐng kàn rì chū.

It means, "I'm going to the hilltop tomorrow to watch sunrise."

月

yue

moon;
month

To form the character for moon (or lunar month) man chose the crescent 月. The original pictograph suggested two phases of a waxing new moon 月. Tilting it: 月 and then directing it earthwards: 月 exposed man to the influence of moonbeam radiation — with striking consequences. Pictured here is a beaming moon casting its spell on some beaming moonstruck earthlings.



PENG

| 月 月 月 月 |

| | | |
|----|-----------|------------------------|
| 月饼 | yuè bǐng | mooncake |
| 月份 | yuè fèn | month |
| 月光 | yuè guāng | moonlight |
| 月经 | yuè jīng | menstruation |
| 月刊 | yuè kān | monthly publication |
| 月亮 | yuè liang | moon |
| 月票 | yuè piào | monthly ticket |
| 月球 | yuè qiú | the moon |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 月色 | yuè sè | moonlight |
| 月蚀 | yuè shí(shi) | eclipse of the moon |
| 月薪 | yuè xīn | monthly salary |
| 月夜 | yuè yè | moonlit night |
| 月下老人 | yuè xià lǎo rén | matchmaker |
| 尝月 | shǎng yuè | enjoy the moonlight |

Example:

我们一面尝月，一面吃月饼。

Wǒ mén yì miàn shǎng yuè, yì miàn chī yuè bǐng.

It means, "We ate mooncakes while enjoying the moonlight."

明

ming

brilliant;
bright;
enlightened



PENG



| | | |
|-----|------------------|----------------------|
| 明白 | ming bái | understand; clear |
| 明亮 | ming liàng | shining; bright |
| 明朗 | ming láng | bright and clear |
| 明媚 | ming mei | bright and beautiful |
| 明年 | ming nián | next year |
| 明显 | ming xiǎn | obvious |
| 明智 | ming zhì | wise |
| 明晃晃 | ming huǎng huǎng | glaring; shining |
| 明信片 | ming xìn piàn | postcard |

| | | |
|------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 明辨是非 | ming biān shì fēi | distinguish right from wrong |
| 明目张胆 | ming mù zhāng dǎn | openly; blatantly |
| 明争暗斗 | ming zhēng àn dòu | struggle overtly and covertly |
| 明知故犯 | ming zhī gù fàn | commit mistakes deliberately |
| 明知故问 | ming zhī gù wèn | question knowingly |

Example:

我 明 白 你 的 意 思 。

Wǒ míng bái nǐ de yì sī.

It means, "I understand what you mean."



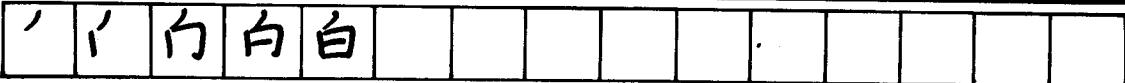
bái

clear;
white;
plain

As the sun (日) peeps above the horizon its very first ray () begins to dispel the shadowy haze of night. Hence, 白, the symbol for clear, white or plain. Man easily understands anything that is bright (明) and clear (白), so "bright and clear" means to understand (明白). Apparently, this is not always easily understood as our picture shows.



PENG



白菜
白费
白宫

bái cài
bái fèi
Bái Gōng

Chinese cabbage
in vain; waste
The White House
(official residence
of the president
of America)

白喉
白色
白糖
白兔

bái hóu
bái sè
bái táng
bái tù

diphtheria
white colour
white sugar
white rabbit

白茫茫
白日梦
白血球
白手起家

坦白
真象大白

bái máng máng
bái rì mèng
bái xuè qiú
bái shǒu qǐ jiā

tǎn bái
zhēn xiàng dà bái

an endless
whiteness
daydream
white corpuscle
start from scratch;
build up from
nothing
frank
matter that is
finally made clear

Example:

他 对 我 很 坦 白。

Tā duì wǒ hěn tǎn bái.

It means, "He is very frank to me."

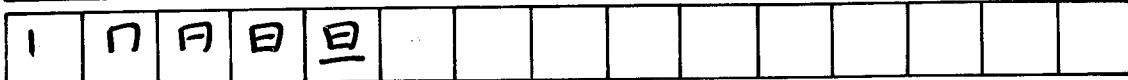


dàn

dawn;
daybreak

오 旦

The daily appearance of the sun (日) above the horizon (旦) gave man his concept of dawn 旦. From the sun's early rising rose the proverbial saying: "To get up early for three mornings is equal to one day of time." Man preached this — from the rising of the sun to its setting — but it never dawned on him to practise it.



| | | | | | |
|------|-----------------|---------------------|----|----------|-------------------------|
| 旦暮 | dàn mù | morning and evening | 花旦 | huā dàn | prima donna in an opera |
| 旦夕 | dàn xī | in a short while | 元旦 | yuán dàn | New Year's Day |
| 旦夕之间 | dàn xī zhī jiān | within a single day | 一旦 | yī dàn | once; as soon as |

Example:

元旦是公共假期。

Yuan dàn shì gōng gòng jià qī.

It means, "New Year's Day is a public holiday."



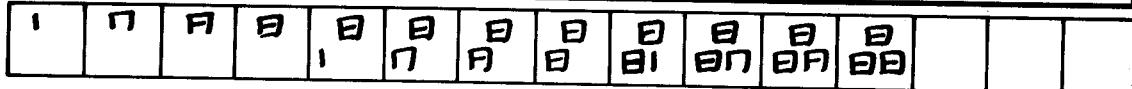
jīng

crystal;
brilliant;
sparkling

To reflect his brilliance, man arranged three suns (日) into a symmetrical, geometrical pattern and crystallized this into a sparkling ideograph and graphic symbol for crystal: 晶. For generations man has been gazing into his crystal ball but, crystal-clear though it was, he couldn't see much of a future in it.



PENG



晶体

jīng tǐ

crystal

晶莹

jīng yíng

lustrous; brilliant

晶体管

jīng tǐ guǎn

transistor

结晶

jié jīng

result; product;
crystallization

亮晶晶

水晶

liàng jīng jīng

shuǐ jīng

shining
crystalline

Example:

这 本 书 是 他 多 年 研 究 的 结 晶。

Zhè běn shū shì tā duō nián yán jiū de jié jīng.

It means, "This book is the result of his many years of research."

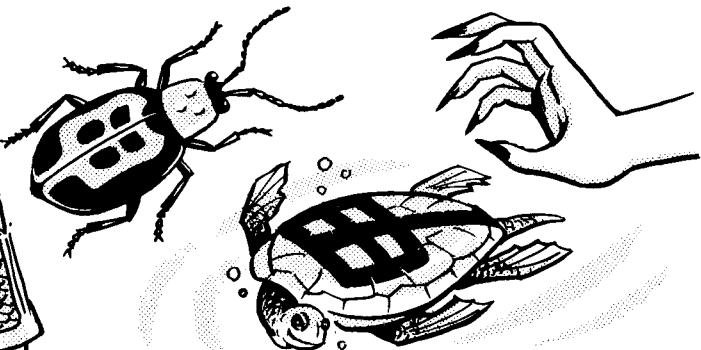
甲

jiǎ

first;
armour or
protective
covering

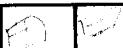
The guiding mark 甲 (meaning first) is the first of the “ten stems” — the decimal cycle of time reckoning. Originally written: 十, it was later enclosed in a square: 田. To differentiate it from 田 (field) the vertical line was extended downwards: 甲. A subsequent modification came to suggest “helmet” because of its resemblance: 冂. By extension, the modern form, 甲 covers a whole range of hard protective coverings like armour, shells, scales and nails used not only for protection, but also for aggression.

十 田 甲 宁 甲



PENG

丨 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎



| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|----------------------------|-----|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 甲板 | jiǎ bǎn | deck of a ship | 甲鱼 | jiǎ yú | soft-shelled turtle |
| 甲虫 | jiǎ chóng | beetle | 甲骨文 | jiǎ gǔ wén | inscriptions on oracle bones |
| 甲等 | jiǎ děng | first class or first grade | 甲状腺 | jiǎ zhuàng xiàn | thyroid gland - |
| 甲克 | jiǎ kè | jacket | 装甲兵 | zhuāng jiǎ bīng | armoured corps |
| 甲壳 | jiǎ qiào | crust | | | |

Example:

有许多人在甲板上作日光浴。

Yǒu xǔ duō rén zài jiǎn bǎn shàng zuò rì guāng yù.

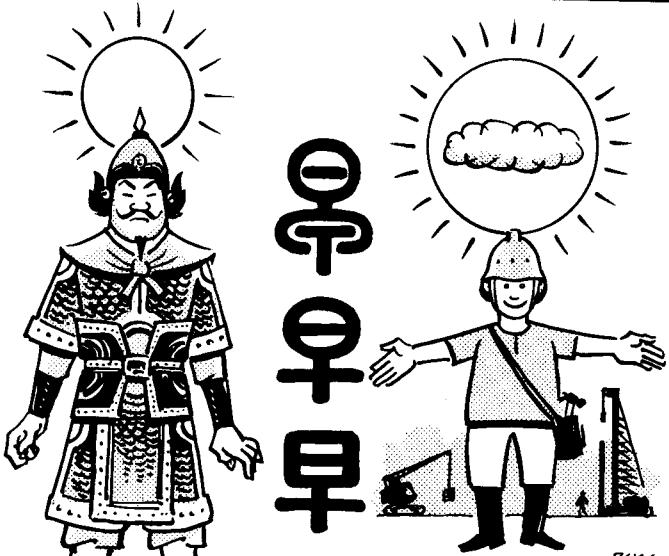
It means, "There are many people sunbathing on the deck."



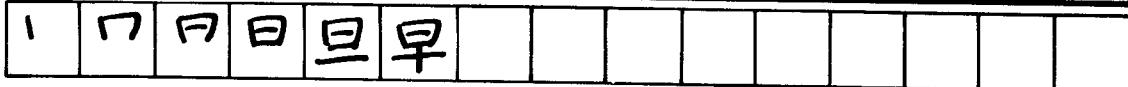
zǎo

early;
morning

早 (meaning early or morning) is the time of the day when the sun (日) has risen to the height of a man's helmet (十). 十 is the old form of 甲, originally meaning helmet. Since another meaning of 甲 (十) is "first", the character: 早 signifies also the first (十) sun (日), that is, the early morning: 早.



PENG



| | | |
|----|----------|--------------------|
| 早安 | zǎo ān | good morning |
| 早班 | zǎo bān | morning shift |
| 早餐 | zǎo cān | breakfast |
| 早操 | zǎo cāo | morning exercise |
| 早晨 | zǎo chén | early morning |
| 早春 | zǎo chūn | early spring |
| 早婚 | zǎo hūn | marrying too early |

| | | |
|----|-----------|---------------------|
| 早年 | zǎo nián | one's early life |
| 早期 | zǎo qī | early stage |
| 早日 | zǎo rì | at an early date |
| 早上 | zǎo shàng | (early) morning |
| 早晚 | zǎo wǎn | morning and evening |

*Example:*请早 日 答 覆。
Qǐng zǎo rì dá fù.

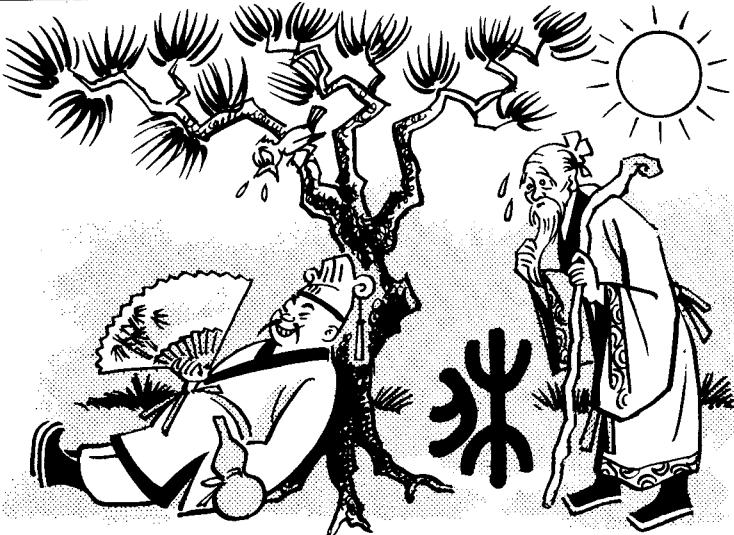
It means, "Please reply as soon as possible."

休

xiū

rest;
cease

This is a refreshing character for any person (人) working near a shady tree (木). It literally means "rest" (休) and pictures a person (人 or 亻) leaning against a tree (木). Of the tree the Chinese proverb laments: "One generation plants the trees under whose shade another generation takes its ease." Exemplifying this, we show a character leisurely basking in the sunshine and leaning himself against a tree planted by an older generation.



PENG

休 亠 午 什 付 休

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|--|----|-----------|--------------------------|
| 休会 | xiū huì | adjourn (meeting) | 休养 | xiū yǎng | recuperate or convalesce |
| 休假 | xiū jià | on leave | 休业 | xiū yè | wind up (business) |
| 休息 | xiū xi | rest or relax | 休战 | xiū zhàn | ceasefire |
| 休闲 | xiū xián | lie fallow (land) | 休整 | xiū zhěng | rest and reorganize |
| 休想 | xiū xiǎng | don't expect | 休止 | xiū zhǐ | cease or stop |
| 休学 | xiū xué | suspend one's schooling without losing one's status as a student | | | |

Example:

他在医院里休养。

Tā zài yī yuàn lǐ xiū yǎng.

It means, "He is recuperating in the hospital."

东(東) dōng

Man turned his head around, looking for a suitable sign for “east”—the direction he faced when he saw the sun rise every day. He succeeded one morning when he observed the sun (日) through the trees (木). So sun (日) behind tree (木) became east (東). Fortunately, success did not turn man's head, otherwise he would have been left facing the wrong direction.

$\Theta + \text{木} = \text{東} = 東$



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 士 | 夊 | 夊 | 东 | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | |
|-----|---------------|-----------------------|
| 东方 | dōng fāng | the East |
| 东风 | dōng fēng | east wind |
| 东京 | Dōng Jīng | Tokyo |
| 东欧 | Dōng Óu | Eastern Europe |
| 东西 | dōng xī | things; East and West |
| 东半球 | dōng bàn qiú | eastern hemisphere |
| 东方人 | Dōng Fāng Rén | Orientals |

| | | |
|------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 东南亚 | Dōng Nán Yà | Southeast Asia |
| 东奔西走 | dōng bēn xī zǒu | busy oneself with |
| 东山再起 | dōng shān zài qǐ | stage a |
| 东西南北 | Dōng Xī Nán Běi | come-back |
| 东张西望 | dōng zhāng xī wàng | East, West, South, North |
| | | gaze (or peer) around |

Example:

太阳由东方升上来。

Tài yáng yóu dōng fāng shēng shàng lái.

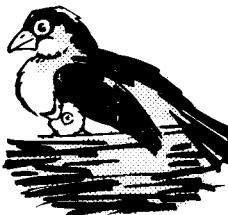
It means, “The sun rises in the east.”



Xi

west

As the sun settles in the west birds roost in their nests; so a cross-hatched bird's nest provided the cradle for "west", and nest became west 西. Man's fertile imagination conceived a new ideograph — a nest with a brooding bird: 西 hatching up a new form: 西 which finally developed into a full-fledged character for west: 西. As all "things" exist between east (東) and west (西), the combination east-west, meaning "things", came to be applied to anything from east to west.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 一 | 一 | 二 | 三 | 四 | 五 | 六 | 七 | 八 | 九 | 十 | 十一 |
| 一 | 一 | 二 | 三 | 四 | 五 | 六 | 七 | 八 | 九 | 十 | 十一 |

西边

xī biān

west side

西餐

xī cān

Western-style food

西方

xī fāng

the West

西瓜

xī guā

watermelon

西湖

Xī Hú

West Lake in Hangzhou

西南

xī nán

southwest

西欧

Xī Óu

Western Europe

西洋

Xī Yáng

the West

西医

Xī yī

a doctor trained in Western medicine

西藏

Xī Zàng

Tibet

西装

Xī zhuāng

Western dress

西半球

Xī bàn qiú

western hemisphere

西班牙

Xī Bān Yá

Spain

西伯利亚

Xī Bó Lì Yà

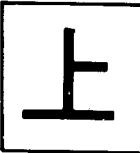
Siberia

Example:

西瓜有许多种子。

Xī quā yǒu xǔ duō zhǒng zi.

It means, "A watermelon has many seeds."



shàng
up;
above;
ascend

Since up and down, above and below are relative and abstract terms, man conveyed the ideas graphically by relating a simple stroke to a horizontal foundation line (—). This stroke above the base line was originally a dot: · extended to a line: —, propped upright: | embellished: 丨 and finally stabilized: 上.



Pictured above are the abstract ideas of up and above, translated very stiffly into concrete forms.

PENG



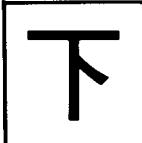
| | | | | | |
|----|--------------|---|----|------------|-------------------------|
| 上班 | shàng bān | go to work | 上代 | shàng dài | former generations |
| 上辈 | shàng bèi | one's elders | 上当 | shàng dàng | cheated |
| 上宾 | shàng bīn | distinguished guest; guest of honour | 上等 | shàng děng | first-class |
| 上苍 | shàng cāng | Heaven; God | 上帝 | shàng dì | God |
| 上策 | shàng cè | the best plan | 上级 | shàng jí | higher authority |
| 上层 | shàng céng | upper strata | 上课 | shàng kè | attend class |
| 上场 | shàng chǎng | appear on the stage | 上空 | shàng kōng | in the sky; overhead |
| 上床 | shàng chuáng | go to bed | 上游 | shàng yóu | upper stream |

Example:

她 上 班 去 了 。

Tā shàng bān qù le.

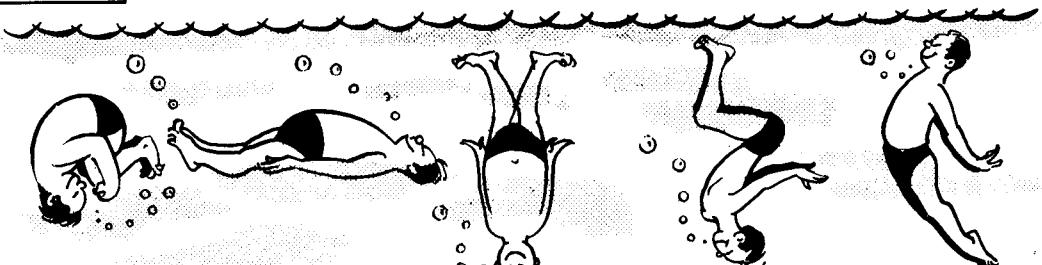
It means, "She's gone to work."



xia

down;
below;
descend

The concept of down and below is clarified in relation to a horizontal line. The stroke below the fundamental line was originally a dot: 一 which was extended to a line: 二 for ease in writing. The modified forms: 亅 and 亚 eventually led to the final ideograph: 下. The characters below, although literally under water, are figuratively above water.



PENG



| | | |
|----|-----------|------------------------------------|
| 下班 | xia bān | be off duty |
| 下辈 | xia bèi | the younger generation of a family |
| 下策 | xia cè | bad plan |
| 下层 | xia céng | lower level |
| 下场 | xia chǎng | end; fate |
| 下沉 | xia chén | sink |
| 下等 | xia děng | low grade |

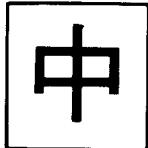
| | | |
|----|-----------|-----------------|
| 下级 | xia jí | lower level |
| 下贱 | xia jiàn | mean; degrading |
| 下降 | xia jiàng | descend |
| 下课 | xia kè | class is over |
| 下来 | xia lai | come down |
| 下令 | xia lìng | instruct; order |
| 下流 | xia liú | despicable |
| 下落 | xia luò | whereabouts |

Example:

他下午要去看戏。

Tā xià wǔ yào qù kàn xì.

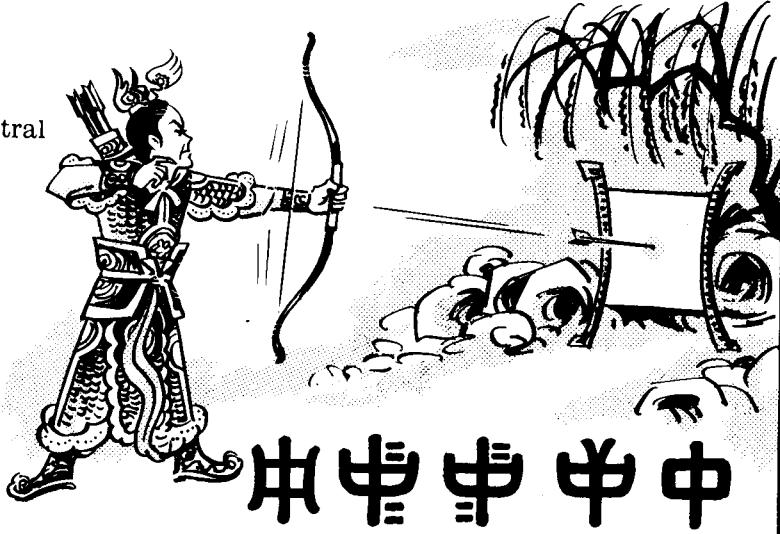
It means, "He is going for a show in the afternoon."



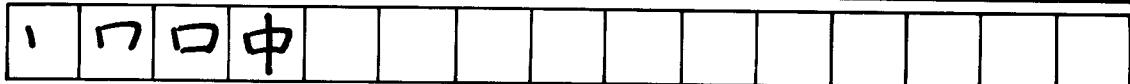
zhōng

centre;
middle;neutral

By shooting an arrow: I right into the centre of a square target: 中 man scored a bull's-eye and secured a mark for "centre": 中. He added a decoration of four stripes: 中, rearranged them: 中, stripped them off: 中, and finally hit his mark for simplicity: 中. The symbol also means standing in the middle or neutrality (中立). Unfortunately, in the application of neutrality, man has completely missed his mark.



PENG



| | | | | | |
|----|------------|--------------------|----|------------|------------------|
| 中部 | zhōng bù | central section | 中华 | Zhōng Huá | China |
| 中餐 | zhōng cān | Chinese meal | 中间 | zhōng jiān | middle |
| 中层 | zhōng céng | middle-level | 中立 | zhōng lì | neutral |
| 中程 | zhōng céng | intermediate range | 中年 | zhōng nián | middle-aged |
| 中等 | zhōng děng | middle-class | 中途 | zhōng tú | midway |
| 中东 | Zhōng Dōng | the Middle East | 中文 | zhōng wén | Chinese language |
| 中断 | zhōng duàn | break off | 中学 | zhōng xué | secondary school |
| 中国 | Zhōng Guó | China | | | |

Example:

他出身中等家庭。

Tā chū shēn zhōng děng jiā tíng.

It means, "He comes from a middle-class family."

奴

nú
slave;
servant

A woman 女 under the hand 又 of a master signifies slave 奴. The components 又 and 女 put together literally mean “handmaid” — a female who slaves with her hands. 奴 includes slaves of both sexes who serve their masters hand and foot.



PENG

人 女 女 奴 奴

| | | |
|----|--------|-----------------|
| 奴婢 | nú bì | female slave |
| 奴才 | nú cài | flunkey; lackey |
| 奴化 | nú huà | enslave |
| 奴隶 | nú lì | slave |
| 奴仆 | nú pú | male slave |

| | | |
|----|---------|------------------------|
| 奴性 | nú xìng | servile disposition |
| 奴役 | nú yì | slavery |

奴隶制度
nú lì zhì dù

slave system

Example:

奴 隶 制 度 已 废 除 。

Nú lì zhì dù yǐ fèi chū.

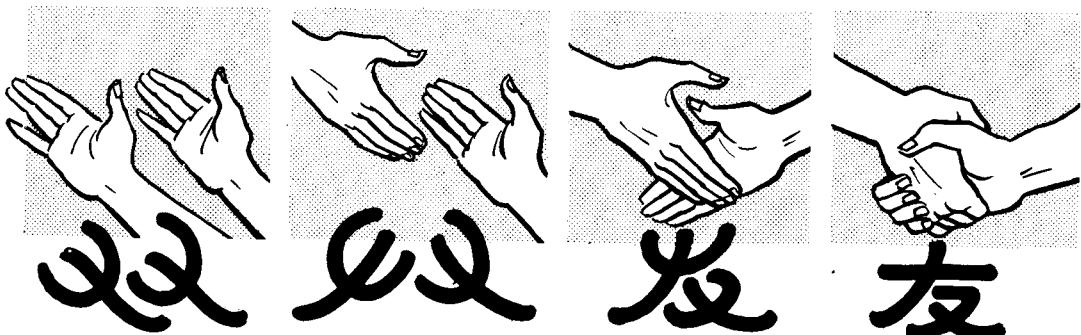
It means, “Slavery has already been abolished.”

友

yǒu

friend

The character for “friend” originated with two right hands acting co-operatively in the same direction 又 and later reaching out to clasp each other in friendship 友. By placing the hands, one upon the other: 又 and, with a little straightening out, man derived the modern reinforced form: 友.



PENG

一 十 方 友

友爱
友邦
友好
友情

yǒu ài
yǒu bāng
yǒu hǎo
yǒu qíng

friendly affection
friendly nation
friendly
friendship

友人
友善
友谊
友好协定

yǒu rén
yǒu shàn
yǒu yì
yǒu hǎo xié dìng

friend
friendly
friendship
friendship pact

Example:

他 是 我 的 好 朋 友 。

Tā shì wǒ de hǎo péng yǒu.

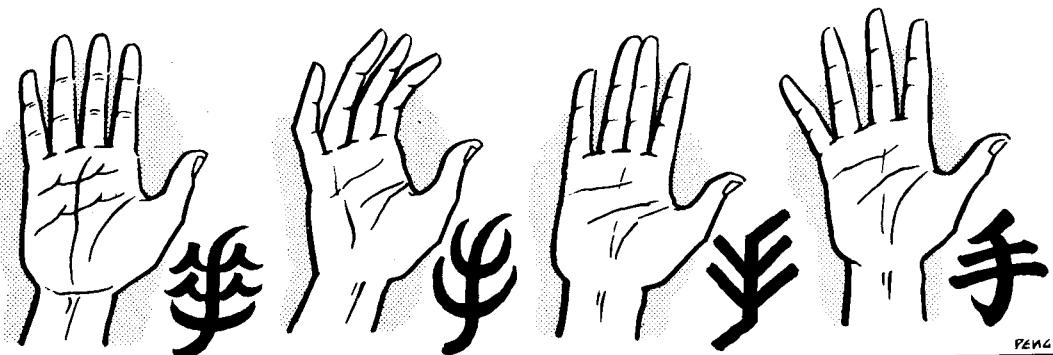
It means, “He is my good friend.”

手

shǒu

hand

THE earliest pictograph for hand placed undue emphasis on the palm lines as basis 手. Practical experience, however, put man on the right lines - the fingers 手. Finally, reinforced with straight lines 手 the character assumed the modern form 手 with fingers of unequal length. For, as the proverb goes, "Of the ten fingers, some are long and some are short." 手 proved handy as radical for numerous characters with its variants 扌 and 才.



PENG

一 二 三 手

手臂
手笔

shǒu bì
shǒu bì

arm
somebody's own
handwriting or
painting

手表
手册
手段
手法
手工

shǒu biǎo
shǒu cè
shǒu duàn
shǒu fǎ
shǒu gōng

wrist-watch
handbook
means; measure
skill; tricks
handwork

手巾
手铐
手枪
手术
手书
手套
手电筒
手榴弹

shǒu jin
shǒu kào
shǒu qiāng
shǒu shù
shǒu shū
shǒu tào
shǒu diàn tǒng
shǒu liú dàn

towel
handcuffs
pistol
surgical operation
handwritten letter
gloves
torch
hand-grenade

Example:

我有一双手。
Wǒ yǒu yí shuāng shǒu.

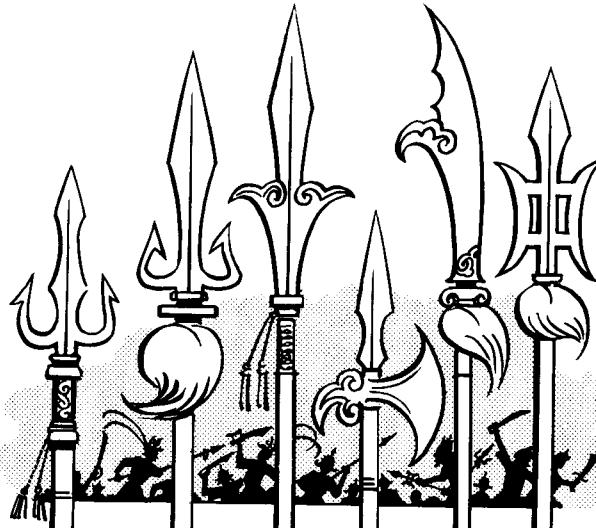
It means, "I have a pair of hands."

戈

gē

spear; lance

戈 is a pictographic representation of an ancient weapon of war - a spearlike lance equipped with hook and crossbar. Although this and other ancient weapons are now obsolete, man has not even begun to beat his swords into ploughshares or his spears into pruning hooks.



戈

PENG

一 一 一 戈

戈壁

Gēbí

the Gobi Desert

干戈

gān gē

weapons; war

倒戈相向

dǎo gē xiāng
xiàng

betray one's own
party

Example:

化干戈为玉帛。

Huà gān gē wéi yù bó.

It means, "Stop war and make peace."

我

wǒ

I; me

THE earliest forms show two spears against each other in direct confrontation: 戟, presumably symbolizing two rights being asserted and, by extension, my right, that is, me. A later transcription projected a new image: 我, a pictograph of a hand 手 grasping a spear 戟, denoting that when man wields in his hand 手 a spear 戟 his ego, the big “I”, emerges. Hence 我 : I.



PENG

43

我 我 我 我 我 我

| | | |
|------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 我们 | wǒ men | we |
| 我爱你 | wǒ ài nǐ | I love you |
| 我们的 | wǒ men de | our; ours |
| 我行我素 | wǒ xíng wǒ sù | persist in one's old ways |

Example:

大家 你 帮 我 , 我 帮 你 很 快 就 把 活 儿 干 完 了 。

Dà jiā nǐ bāng wǒ , wǒ bāng nǐ hěn kuài jiù bǎ huó er gàn wán liǎo .

It means, "With each one giving the other a helping hand, they soon got the job done."

你

nǐ

you

THE classical character for "you", an equal, was 隹, a pictograph of a balance 尸 loaded with 丶 equally on both sides and topped by a phonetic 尔. 隹 was eventually contracted to 尔. By adding 人(person) to 尔, man introduced the human element and came up with 你 - a person who carries the same weight: you.



PENG

你 你 你 你 你 你 你

你好

nǐ hǎo

how do you do

你们

nǐ men

you (plural)

你们的

nǐ men de

your; yours (plural)

你死我活

nǐ sì wǒ huó

life and death
struggle

你追我赶

nǐ zhuī wǒ gǎn

try to overtake
each other in
friendly
emulation

Example:

你 好 吗 ?

Nǐ hǎo ma?

It means, "How do you do?", "how are you?", "hello".

也

yě

also;
in addition to

ORIGINALLY the character 也 was a representation of an ancient drinking horn, shaped like a funnel. In addition to his rightful belongings, man also appropriated this drinking vessel. To this day it has remained in his possession - a pictograph specially borrowed for the conjunction "also", joining man to his drinking horn.

也 也 也 也



PENG

也

| | | |
|----|---------|-------------|
| 也罢 | yě bà | let it be |
| 也好 | yě hǎo | may as well |
| 也行 | yě xíng | all right |
| 也许 | yě xǔ | perhaps |
| 也有 | yě yǒu | also have |

Example:

他 也 许 会 来 。

Tā yě xǔ huì lái .

It means, "Perhaps he may come."

他

tā
he; she

THE character 他 is drawn from 人 (person) and 也 (also). By extension it means "that person also" and refers to the other person: he or she.



PENG

他 他 他 他

| | | |
|----|--------|------------------|
| 他处 | tā chū | elsewhere |
| 他的 | tā de | his |
| 他们 | tā men | they |
| 他人 | tā rén | the other person |

| | | |
|-----|----------|--------------------------|
| 他日 | tā rì | some other day |
| 他乡 | tā xiāng | place far away from home |
| 他自己 | tā zì jǐ | himself |

Example:

他 是 一 个 渔 夫 。

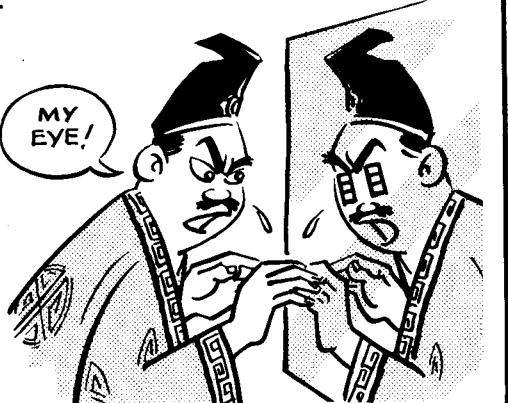
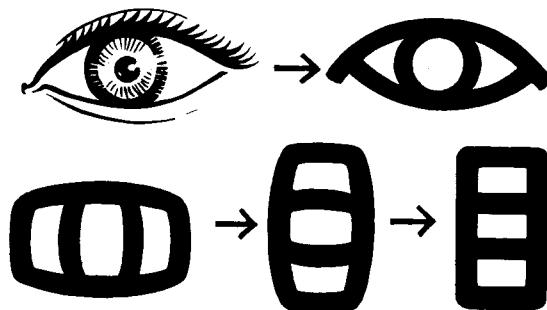
Tā shì yī gè yú fū.

It means, "He is a fisherman."



mù
eye

IN ITS primitive form the eye was pictured naturally with eyelids and pupil 眼. When stylized: 目 its similarity to 四 (four) deceived man's eye; so it was stood on end: 目 and finally squared off: 目. It would seem that even with his very own eyes man could not see eye to eye.



FENG



| | | | | | |
|----|----------|---|------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 目标 | mù biāo | aim | 目前 | mù qīan | at present |
| 目的 | mù dì | purpose; aim; goal | 目送 | mù sòng | watch somebody go |
| 目睹 | mù dù | witness; see for oneself | 目下 | mù xià | now; at present |
| 目光 | mù guāng | sight; vision; view | 目不转睛 | mù bù zhuǎn jīng | stare |
| 目见 | mù jiàn | see for oneself | 目瞪口呆 | mù dèng kǒu dāi | stunned |
| 目力 | mù lì | eyesight | 目空一切 | mù kōng yī qiè | supercilious |
| 目录 | mù lù | contents page or index (of book); catalogue | 目中无人 | mù zhōng wú rén | look down on others; be overweening |

Example:

我 目 前 还 不 想 结 婚。

Wǒ mù qián hái bù xiǎng jié hūn.

It means, "I don't intend to get married now."

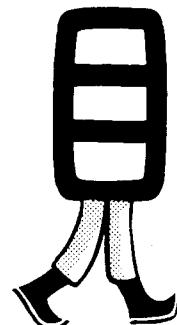
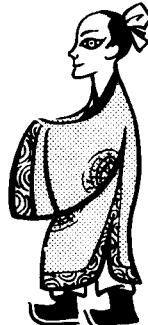
见

(見)

jiàn

see

FOR the verb "to see" the eye 目 was set atop man 人. As the eye grew, man shrank to produce the regular form 見, now simplified to 见.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| I | 几 | 贝 | 见 | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

见报

jiàn bào

appear in the newspaper

见鬼

jiàn guǐ

preposterous

见解

jiàn jiě

opinions

见谅

jiàn liàng

excuse me; forgive me

见面

jiàn miàn

meet

见识

jiàn shí

widen one's knowledge; enrich one's experience

见闻

jiàn wén

knowledge

见习

jiàn xí

learn on the job

见效

jiàn xiào

effective

见笑

jiàn xiào

laugh at (me or us)

见证

jiàn zhèng

witness; testimony

见异思迁

jiàn yì sī qiān

fickle; inconstant

见义勇为

jiàn yì yǒng wéi

ready to take up the cudgels for a just cause

不见

bù jiàn

lost; disappeared

Example:

我不见了一本书。

Wǒ bù jiàn le yī běn shū.

It means, "I lost a book."

看

kàn
see

IN THIS ideograph man raised his hand 手 above his eye 目 to cut off the sun's rays in order to see clearly 看. From this experience he also saw clearly the point of the Chinese proverb: "You cannot cut off the sunlight with one hand."



看 穿 待 看 到 看 法 看 见 看 来 看 破

| | | |
|----|-----------|--------------------------|
| 看病 | kàn bìng | consult a doctor |
| 看穿 | kàn chuān | see through |
| 看待 | kàn dài | look upon; regard; treat |
| 看到 | kàn dào | catch sight of; see |
| 看法 | kàn fa | view; opinion |
| 看见 | kàn jiàn | see |
| 看来 | kàn lái | it looks as if |
| 看破 | kàn pò | see through |

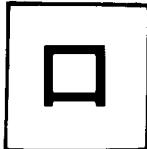
| | | |
|------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 看齐 | kàn qí | keep abreast of |
| 看轻 | kàn qīng | underestimate |
| 看中 | kàn zhōng | take a fancy to |
| 看重 | kàn zhòng | think highly of |
| 看不惯 | kàn bu guàn | cannot bear the sight of |
| 看得起 | kàn de qǐ | think highly of |
| 另眼相看 | lìng yǎn xiāng kàn | treated favourably |

Example:

他 是 来 看 病 的。

Tā shì lái kàn bìng de.

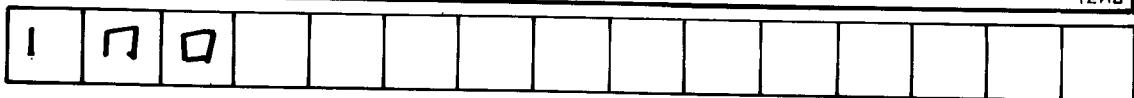
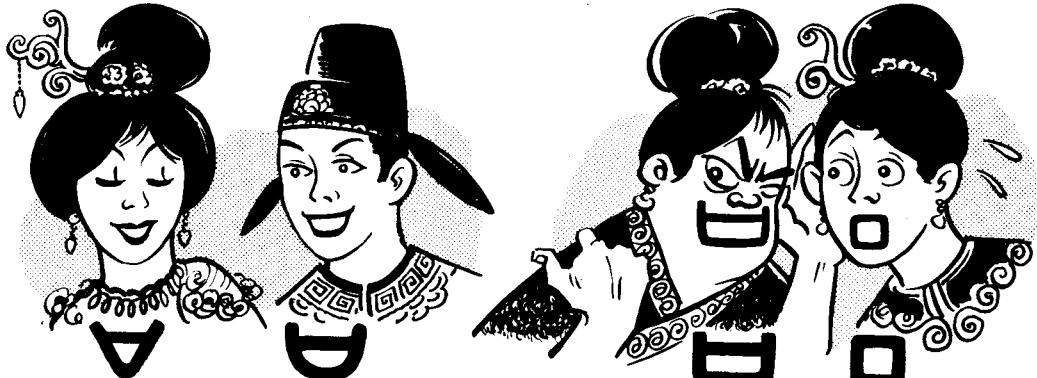
It means, "He comes to consult a doctor."



kǒu

mouth;
opening

THE character for mouth was originally a pictograph of an open mouth: ▽ broadening into a smile: ⌂ and eventually stiffening: □ and contracting to a square: □ . □ also means an opening. Wise old sayings always caution one about those with a big mouth .



| | | | | | |
|----|----------|----------------|------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 口才 | kǒu cí | eloquence | 口渴 | kǒu kě | thirsty |
| 口吃 | kǒu chī | stutter | 人口 | rén kǒu | population |
| 口臭 | kǒu chòu | bad breath | 口气 | kǒu qì | tone |
| 口袋 | kǒu dài | pocket | 口试 | kǒu shì | oral examination |
| 口福 | kǒu fú | gourmet's luck | 口水 | kǒu shuǐ | saliva |
| 口供 | kǒu gòng | testimony | 口是心非 | kǒu shì xīn fēi | says yes when one means no |
| 口号 | kǒu hào | slogan | 夸口 | kuā kǒu | boasting |
| 口红 | kǒu hóng | lipstick | | | |
| 口角 | kǒu jué | quarrel | | | |

Example:

他的口才很好。

Tā de kǒu cí hěn hǎo.

It means, "He is very eloquent."



yán

words;
speak

"In a multitude of words," the Chinese saying goes, "there will certainly be a mistake." This is evident from the character for words itself: 言. Originally written 訙, it represented a mouth 口 from which issued a mistake 讠 (an old form of 言). Apparently, to correct this error, man changed 訙 to 言. So today, with great care, his mouth 口 speaks its lines 言, transforming soundwaves into words: 言.

讠 = 口 + **言**
言 = 口 + **三**



PENG



| | | |
|----|----------|--|
| 言辞 | yán cí | one's words |
| 言和 | yán hé | make peace |
| 言论 | yán lùn | speech |
| 言谈 | yán tán | the way one speaks or the words one says |
| 言行 | yán xíng | words and deeds |

| | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 言语 | yán yǔ | spoken language |
| 言不由衷 | yán bù yóu zhōng | speak insincerely |
| 言而无信 | yán ér wú xìn | fail to keep faith |
| 言过其实 | yán guò qí shí | exaggerate |
| 言听计从 | yán tīng jì cóng | readily accept one's advice |
| 言外之意 | yán wài zhī yì | implications |

Example:

他言行不一致。

Tā yán xíng bù yì zhì.

It means, "His words do not correspond with his actions."

信

xìn

believe;
trust;
letter

This character pictures a man 人 standing by his word 言, a fitting symbol for faith and trust: 信. Ancient forms show a man and mouth; also a heart and words, i.e., words from the heart - sincere and honest. As only man can transmit his word by writing, 信 (man and word) also came to mean the written letter or epistle.



PENG

信 信 信 信 信 信 信 信

信封
信奉
信服
信号
信件
信笺
信教
信赖
信任

xìn fēng
xìn fèng
xìn fú
xìn hào
xìn jiàn
xìn jiān
xìn jiào
xìn lài
xìn rěn

envelope
believe in
be convinced
signal
letter
letter pad
believe in a religion
trust
have confidence in

信条
信徒
信托
信箱
信心
信仰
信用
写信

xìn tiáo
xìn tú
xìn tuō
xìn xiāng
xìn xīn
xìn yǎng
xìn yòng
xiě xìn

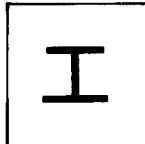
creed
disciple
trust
post box
confidence; faith
belief
trustworthiness
write letters

Example:

请给我一个信封。

Qǐng gěi wǒ yí gè xìn fēng.

It means, "Please give me an envelope."



gōng

work;
labour;
skill

工 is a pictograph of the ancient workman's square or carpenter's ruler. By extension, it means work, labour or skill. An early form: 工 included three parallel lines traced with the square. Man has always had problems with work and remuneration. Instead of striving for prosperity through work, he works for prosperity through strife, as our picture of master and servant shows.

MORE PAY
+ LESS WORK
= PROSPERITY

MORE WORK
+ LESS PAY
= PROSPERITY



PENG



| | | |
|----|------------|----------------------|
| 工厂 | gōng chǎng | factory |
| 工党 | Gōng Dǎng | the Labour Party |
| 工地 | gōng dì | construction site |
| 工夫 | gōng fū | time; effort |
| 工具 | gōng jù | tools |
| 工会 | gōng huì | trade union |
| 工匠 | gōng jiàng | craftsman |
| 工农 | gōng nóng | workers and peasants |

| | | |
|-----|----------------|-----------------|
| 工钱 | gōng qián | service charges |
| 工人 | gōng rén | worker |
| 工业 | gōng yè | industry |
| 工艺 | gōng yì | technology |
| 工资 | gōng zī | wages |
| 工作 | gōng zuò | job |
| 工程师 | gōng chéng shī | engineer |
| 工业化 | gōng yè huà | industrialize |
| 工艺品 | gōng yì pǐn | crafts |

Example:

他是个工人。

Tā shì gè gōng rén.

It means, "He is a worker."

左

zuǒ

left;
also a Chinese
surname

左

The character for left: 左 depicts the hand 扌 that holds the carpenter's square 匚—the left. The left hand 扌 is meant to help its more skilled correlative member in manual work 工 as, for example, holding the ruler while the right hand draws the line. 左 stands for the direction left.



一 夂 夂 左 左

左边
左面
左派
左倾
左手
左翼

zuǒ biān
zuǒ miàn
zuǒ pài
zuǒ qīng
zuǒ shǒu
zuǒ yì

left side
left side
leftist
left-leaning
left hand
left wing

左右
左右手
左右逢源
左右为难

zuǒ yòu
zuǒ yòu shǒu
zuǒ yòu féng yuán
zuǒ yòu wéi nán

left and right
the right-hand man
win advantages
from both sides
in a dilemma

Example:

他用左手写字。

Tā yòng zuǒ shǒu xiě zì.

It means, "He writes with his left hand."

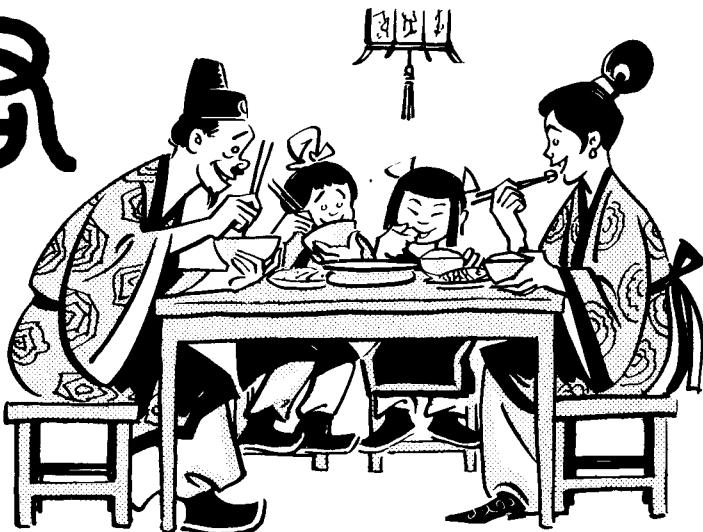
右

you

right

The character for right: 右 is simply a hand 才 and a mouth 口, signifying the hand you eat with — the right. 右 stands for the direction right.

右



PENG

一 大 大 右 右

右边
右面
右派
右倾

yòu biān
yòu miàn
yòu pài
yòu qīng

right side
right side
rightist
right deviation

右手
右翼
向右

yòu shǒu
yòu yì
xiàng yòu

right hand
right wing
turn right

Example:

他 向 右 转 。

Tā xiàng yòu zhuǎn .

It means, "He turns right."

舌

shé

tongue

舌 舌 舌

"The tongue is like a sharp knife; it kills without drawing blood," so warns the Chinese proverb. Exemplifying this, early forms of the character show a forked tongue thrust viciously out of the mouth: 舌. It skilfully smoothens itself: 舌 and finally straightens: 舌 into the new form: 舌.



PENG

𠙴 千 千 舌 舌

| | | |
|----|----------|-------------------|
| 舌尖 | shé jiān | tip of the tongue |
| 舌头 | shé tou | tongue |
| 舌音 | shé yīn | lingual sounds |
| 舌战 | shé zhàn | heated discussion |

Example:

辩 论 会 中 , 双 方 展 开 舌 战 。

Biàn lùn huì zhōng, shuāng fāng zhǎn kāi shé zhàn.

It means, "Both sides are having a heated discussion at the debate."

话 | (話)

huà

talk; speech; language

Man combined words 言 and tongue 舌 to produce 話, meaning speech or language. To emphasize the importance of weighing words before delivery and to caution against their indiscriminate proliferation, the Chinese proverb warns: "Water and words are easy to pour out but impossible to recover."



PENG

话许许多计之‘’

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|----------------------|------|----------------|---|
| 话别 | huà bié | say goodbye | 话题 | huà tí | subject of a talk |
| 话柄 | huà bǐng | subject for ridicule | 话里有话 | huà lǐ yǒu huà | there's more to it than what is merely said |
| 话旧 | huà jiù | talk about old times | | | |
| 话剧 | huà jù | stage play | 笑话 | xiào huà | joke |

Example:

他讲话很大声。

Tā jiǎng huà hěn dà shēng.

It means, "He talks very loudly."



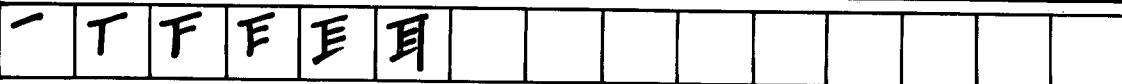
ěr
ear

From time immemorial man discerned the wisdom of listening. He proclaimed from ear to ear the proverbial saying: "A good talker is inferior to a good listener." The pictograph he created for the listening ear began with a natural rendition: 耳 and ended with a stylized form: 目. His talking about the listening ear began also with a natural rendition, but it doesn't seem like ever ending in any form.



58

FENG



| | | |
|----|----------|------------------|
| 耳朵 | ěr duo | ear |
| 耳光 | ěr guāng | a box on the ear |
| 耳环 | ěr huán | earrings |
| 耳机 | ěr jī | earphones |
| 耳孔 | ěr kǒng | earhole |
| 耳鸣 | ěr míng | tinnitus |
| 耳目 | ěr mù | informer |
| 耳塞 | ěr sai | earplug |

| | | |
|------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 耳屎 | ěr shǐ | earwax |
| 耳语 | ěr yǔ | whisper |
| 耳边风 | ěr biān fēng | turn a deaf ear to |
| 耳目一新 | ěr mù yī xīn | pleasant change of atmosphere |
| 耳闻目睹 | ěr wén mù dù | what one hears and sees |

Example:

他的耳朵很灵。

Tā de ěr duo hěn líng

It means, "He has sharp ears."

取

qǔ

take; select; seize

To secure a firm hold on a person the hand 又 is laid on the ear 耳. A hand on the ear, then, means to take hold of, to select or seize: 取. Pictured here are various characters extending a helping hand to demonstrate what 取 means.



PENG

一 两 丌 丐 业 业 业 业 业 业 业 业 业 业 业 业

| | | | | | |
|----|---------|-----------------------------------|------|------------------|--|
| 取材 | qǔ cái | acquire material (for writing) | 取舍 | qǔ shě | make one's choice |
| 取代 | qǔ dài | replace | 取胜 | qǔ shèng | score a success |
| 取道 | qǔ dào | by way of; via | 取消 | qǔ xiāo | cancel |
| 取得 | qǔ dé | obtain | 取笑 | qǔ xiào | make fun of |
| 取缔 | qǔ dì | ban; suppress | 取长补短 | qǔ cháng bǔ duǎn | learn from other's strong points to remedy one's weaknesses |
| 取决 | qǔ jué | be decided by | | | |
| 取巧 | qǔ qiǎo | resort to trickery | | | |

Example:

他取消一个宴会。

Tā qǔ xiāo yī gè yàn huì.

It means, "He has cancelled a dinner."



qǔ
marry

目又 means to select or obtain, i.e., figuratively taking hold of a person by the ear 目 in the hand 又 . To select a woman 女 therefore means to marry: 娶 . Today, however, it is never wise for a man to select a wife in this way, for a hand on her ear definitely means a fist on his ear.



PENG



娶亲

qǔ qīn

marry (a woman);
take a wife

Example:

他 娶 了 亲 以 后，日 子 过 得 很 幸 福 。

Tā qǔ le qīn yǐ hòu, rì zǐ guò de hěn xìng fú .

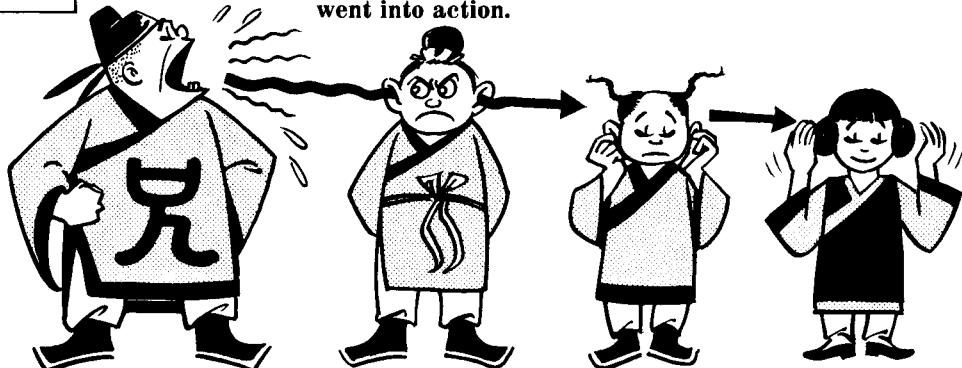
It means, "He leads a happy life after marriage."



XIÖNG

elder brother

The concept of “older brother” is suggested by the ideograph 兄 which combines person 人 with mouth 口. Ideally, 兄 represents a person 人 characterized by a large mouth 口, i.e., one who speaks with authority to exhort or correct a younger brother. Our picture shows what could happen in reality if big mouth of “older brother” went into action.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1 | 口 | 口 | 口 | 兄 | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

兄弟
兄长

xīōng dì
xīōng zhǎng

brothers
respectful form
of address for an
elder brother or
a man friend

兄弟之邦
长兄

xīōng dì zhī bāng
zhǎng xīōng

fraternal states
elder brother

Example:

我有很多兄弟姐妹。

Wǒ yǒu hěn duō xiōng dì jiě mèi.

It means, “I have many brothers and sisters.”

八

BĀ

eight

八

In the etymological sense, 八 means to divide or separate. It is made up of two separate strokes, forming a symmetrical symbol 八. Probably because the number 8 can be easily divided and subdivided, 八 (to divide) came to stand for 8, the much-divisible number. The original seal form: 八, coincidentally, has 8 lines.



PENG



八仙
八月

Bā Xiān
bā yuè

The Eight Immortals
August

八字

bā zì

Eight Characters (in four pairs, indicating the year, month, day and hour of a person's birth, each pair consisting of one Heavenly Stem and one Earthly Branch, used in fortune telling).

Example:

这个月是八月。

Zhè gè yuè shì bā yuè.

It means, "This month is August."

兌

DUI

exchange;
barter

The character 兌 originally meant to speak, bless or rejoice. It was derived from older brother's 兄 dissipation of effluent breath 八 into words of encouragement: 兌 involving the exchange of words. With money talking louder than words in man's affluent society, there arose the need to exchange the old meaning for a new one. Today, 兌 means to exchange money or to barter.



PENG

兑

| | | |
|-----|---------------|-------------------------|
| 兑付 | dùi fù | cash (a cheque, etc) |
| 兑换 | dùi huàn | exchange |
| 兑现 | dùi xiàan | pay cash |
| 兑换表 | dùi huàn biǎo | exchange table |

Example:

他去银行兑现支票。

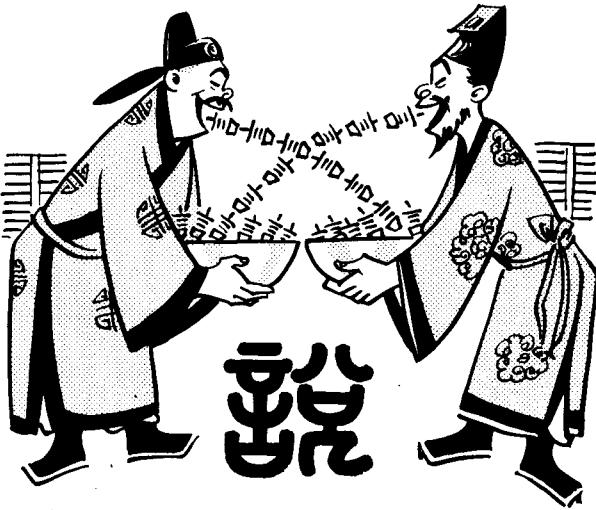
Tā qù yíng háng dùi xiàan zhī piào.

It means, "He went to the bank to cash a cheque."

说 (說)

SHUō speak; theory; story

說 is a character that speaks for itself; it means to speak, i.e., to exchange 言 words 言. It is an ideograph of elder brother 兄 separating his words 八, exchanging them in speech 說. It can also mean theory, opinion or story as, for example: 小說 or "small story", a novel.



說 穿 说法 说服 说话 说谎 说教 说理 说媒 说明

| | | |
|----|------------|-----------------------|
| 说穿 | shuō chuān | expose |
| 说法 | shuō fǎ | way of saying a thing |
| 说服 | shuō fú | persuade; convince |
| 说话 | shuō huà | talk |
| 说谎 | shuō huǎng | tell a lie |
| 说教 | shuō jiào | preach |
| 说理 | shuō lǐ | reason things out |
| 说媒 | shuō méi | act as matchmaker |
| 说明 | shuō míng | explain |

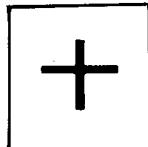
| | | |
|------|------------------|------------------------------|
| 说亲 | shuō qīn | act as matchmaker |
| 说情 | shuō qíng | plead for mercy for somebody |
| 说笑 | shuō xiào | chatting and laughing |
| 说不定 | shuō bu dìng | perhaps |
| 说大话 | shuō dà huà | talk big; boast |
| 说得来 | shuō de lái | can get along |
| 说到做到 | shuō dào zuò dào | do what one says |
| 小说 | xiǎo shuō | novel |

Example:

他不能说服我。

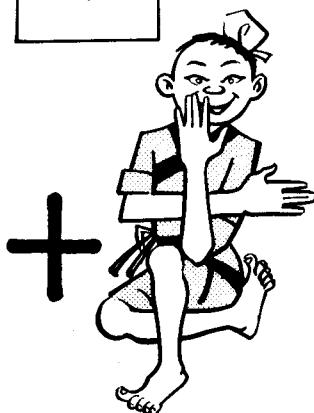
Tā bù néng shuō fú wǒ.

It means, "He cannot convince me."

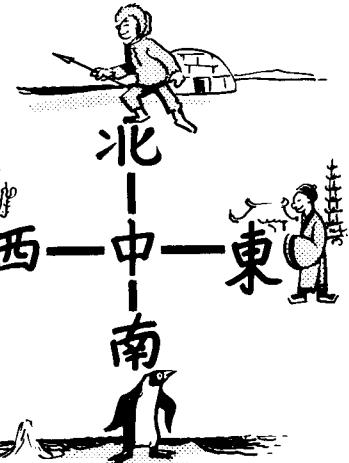


SHÍ

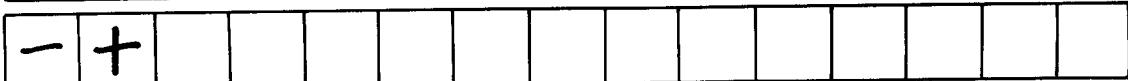
ten



十 is a symbol of completeness. It represents extent in two dimensions + (— and |) and is formed by joining the five cardinal points: east, west, south, north and centre: +. The sign is therefore an appropriate symbol for the numeral 10 — a complete number containing all the other simple numbers of decimal numeration. Our picture illustrates the completeness of 10, both in number and extent.



PENG



| | | |
|-----|------------|----------------------|
| 十分 | shí fēn | very; fully |
| 十万 | shí wàn | one hundred thousand |
| 十月 | shí yuè | October |
| 十足 | shí zú | 100 per cent |
| 十二月 | shí èr yuè | December |
| 十一月 | shí yī yuè | November |

| | | |
|------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 十字架 | shí zì jià | cross |
| 十拿九稳 | shí ná jiǔ wěn | 90 per cent certain of |
| 十全十美 | shí quán shí měi | faultless |
| 十之八九 | shí zhī bā jiǔ | in eight or nine cases out of ten |
| 十字路口 | shí zì lù kǒu | crossroad |

Example:

他 对 你 的 工 作 十 分 满 意。

Tā duì nǐ de gōng zuò shí fēn mǎn yì.

It means, "He is very satisfied with your work."



GŪ

old; ancient;
also a Chinese
surname

This character 古 is applicable to that which has passed through ten + mouths 口 — a tradition dating back ten generations. It includes anything very old, ancient, of antiquity — whether valuable, invaluable or valueless. Our picture illustrates the process of passing through ten mouths something of questionable value.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 十 | 十 | 古 | 古 | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | | |
|----|---------|--------------------|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 古巴 | Gǔ Bā | Cuba | 古老 | gǔ lǎo | ancient |
| 古代 | gǔ dài | ancient times | 古人 | gǔ rén | our forefathers |
| 古典 | gǔ diǎn | classical | 古书 | gǔ shū | ancient book |
| 古董 | gǔ dǒng | antique | 古玩 | gǔ wán | curio |
| 古怪 | gǔ guài | peculiar; strange | 古装 | gǔ zhuāng | ancient costume |
| 古国 | gǔ guó | ancient state | 古色古香 | gǔ sè gǔ xiāng | quaint |
| 古迹 | gǔ jì | historic monuments | 古为今用 | gǔ wéi jīn yòng | make the past serve the present |
| 古旧 | gǔ jiù | archaic | | | |

Example:

罗马有许多古迹。

Luó Mǎ yǒu xǔ duō gǔ jì.

It means, "There are many historical monuments in Rome."

计

(計)

JÌ

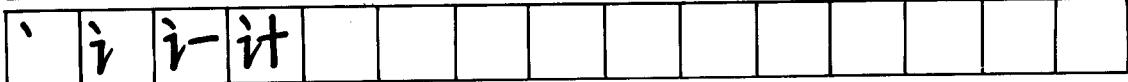
calculate;
plan;
scheme

Sayings 言 in tens + implies the ability to calculate 計 – to know how to enumerate 言 the ten numbers + of the decimal system. By extension, 計 means to reckon, to plan, to scheme. Below we show a pair of scheming, calculating characters, counting their chickens.



PENG

計



| | | |
|----|---------|----------------|
| 计策 | jì cè | stratagem |
| 计划 | jì huà | plan |
| 计较 | jì jiào | haggle over |
| 计谋 | jì móu | scheme |
| 计时 | jì shí | reckon by time |
| 计算 | jì suàn | calculate |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 计议 | jì yì | deliberate; talk over |
| 计算机 | jì suàn jī | calculator |
| 生计 | shēng jì | livelihood |
| 家庭计划 | jīā tíng jì huà | family planning |

Example:

这个计算器多少钱？

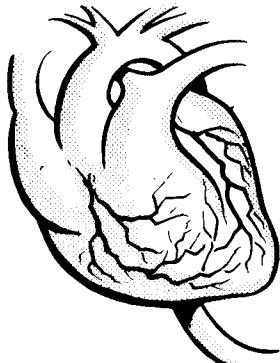
Zhè gè jì suàn jī duō shǎo qián?

It means, "How much does this calculator cost?"

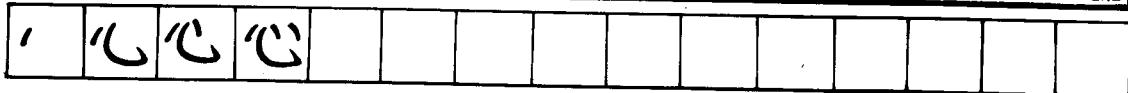


XIN

heart



The original pictograph was a representation of the physical heart. Its membranous sac was ripped open, exposing it: 心 and a delineation of the aorta appended below: 血. A stylization: 血 provided the basis for the modern form: 心. Recognition of this vital organ's role as seat of motivation for both good and evil prompted man to take to heart the ancient saying: "Honey mouth, dagger heart."



| | | |
|----|----------|------------------------------------|
| 心爱 | xīn ài | dear |
| 心得 | xīn dé | personal insight |
| 心烦 | xīn fán | vexed |
| 心腹 | xīn fù | trusted subordinate |
| 心理 | xīn lǐ | psychology |
| 心事 | xīn shì | things that weigh on one's mind |
| 心目 | xīn mù | frame of mind |
| 心情 | xīn qíng | state of mind |

| | | |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 心思 | xīn sī | thought; idea |
| 心甘情愿 | xīn gān qíng yuàn | willingly |
| 心花怒放 | xīn huā nù fàng | elated |
| 心神不定 | xīn shén bù dìng | restless mind |
| 心心相印 | xīn xīn xiāng yìn | have mutual affinity |
| 灰心 | huī xīn | disheartened |

Example:

不要因失败而灰心。

Bù yào yīn shī bài ér huī xīn

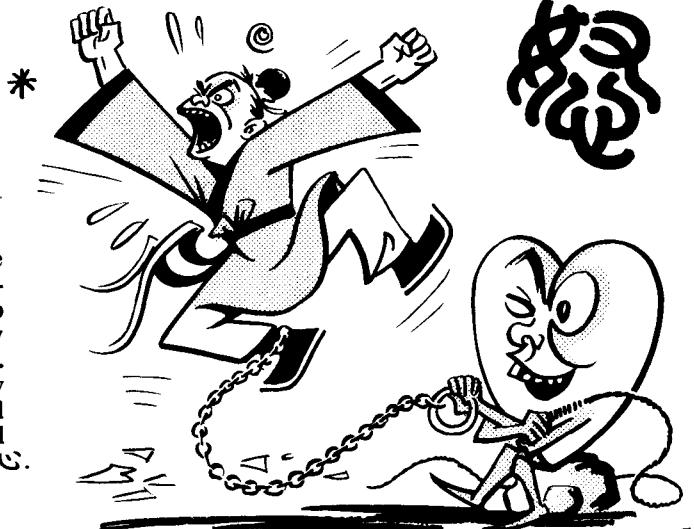
It means, "Do not be disheartened by failures."

怒

NU

anger; rage;
passion

The very sinister structure of **奴**, meaning anger or passion, constitutes a warning to man, for **怒** was secured by bonding slave 奴 to heart 心. It cautions against giving way to anger or passion and becoming slave and handmaid 奴 to the dictates of the heart 心.



人 女 奴 奴 奴 怒 怒 怒

| | | |
|-----|---------|----------------|
| 怒斥 | nù chì | rebuke angrily |
| 怒吼 | nù hǒu | howl |
| 怒火 | nù huǒ | fury |
| •怒气 | nù qì | rage; fury |
| 怒容 | nù róng | angry look |
| 怒色 | nù sè | angry look |

| | | |
|------|------------------|--|
| 怒视 | nù shí | stare at someone or something in anger |
| 怒冲冲 | nù chōng chōng | angrily |
| 怒发冲冠 | nù fà chōng guān | in utmost anger |
| 怒目而视 | nù mù ér shí | stare angrily |
| 愤怒 | fèn nù | angry |

Example:

他们两人怒目而视。

Tā men liǎng rén nù mù ér shí.

It means, "They stare angrily at each other."

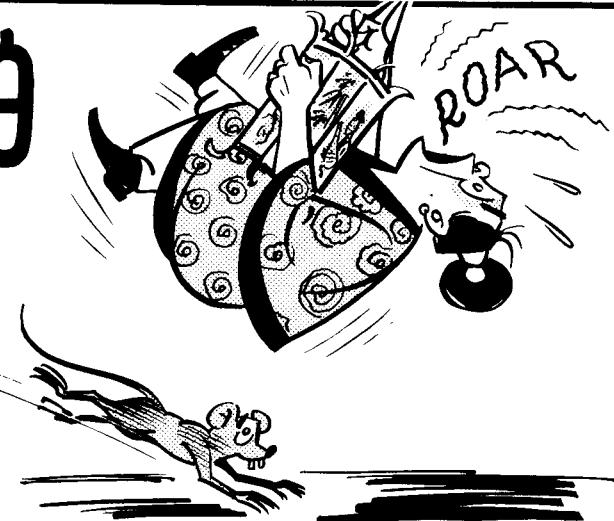
怕

PÀ

fear

Wò

The character for fear has, for radical, 忄 — a variant of heart 心. The phonetic, sound component 白 (white) collaborates with the radical, 忄 (heart) to instil the idea of fear into this character: 怕, which literally means: “white heart”, i.e., fear or lack of courage. Sometimes a “white heart” can inspire the bold deeds of a “lion-heart” as our picture shows.



PENG

忄忄忄忄忄忄忄忄

怕人
怕生

pà rén
pà shēng

terrifying
(of a child) shy
with strangers
afraid of getting
into trouble

怕事

pà shì

怕死
怕羞
害怕

pà sǐ
pà xiū
hài pà

fear death
bashful; shy
scared

Example:

她很怕我。

Tā hěn pà wǒ.

It means, “She is scared of me.”

身

SHĒN

body

身 身 身 身

This character originally meant “pregnant”; it pictured a human figure with prominent belly and one leg thrust forward to support and balance the body: 身. The modern form: 身 also means “the human body” - either male or female, ordinary or outstanding. We show a couple of outstanding ones - outstanding in “body”, not in form or figure.



PENG

身 身 身 身 身 身

身边

shēn biān

at (or by) one's
side

身材

shēn cāi

figure (body)

身分

shēn fèn

social status

身价

shēn jià

social status

身躯

shēn qū

body; stature

身世

shēn shì

one's lot

身体

shēn tǐ

body

身心

shēn xīn

body and mind

身孕

shēn yùn

pregnancy

身分证

shēn fèn zhèng

identity card

身临其境

shēn lín qí jìng

be present on the
spot

Example:

他的身体很弱。

Tā de shēn tǐ hěn ruò.

It means, “He is very weak.”

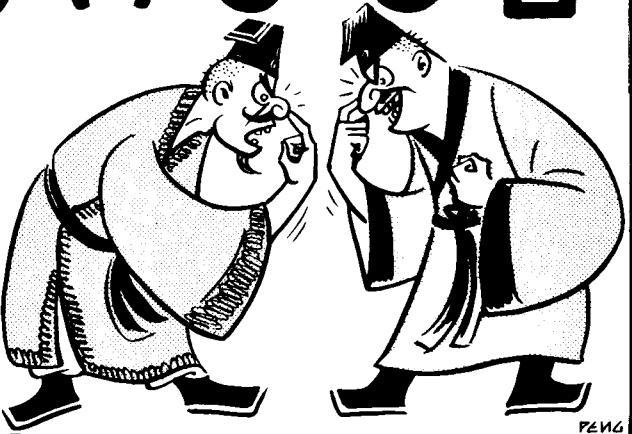
自

zì

self;
oneself

自 自 自 自

Because the nose sticks out most from the face — sometimes too far out — it characterizes the person and symbolizes his personality. A pictographic representation of the nose therefore personifies, not the nose, but "self" or "oneself". Our picture emphasizes the dominant role of the nose in a confrontation of personalities.



PEN

自 自 自 自

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|-------------------------------------|------|------------------|----------------------------|
| 自卑 | zì bēi | self-confession | 自由 | zì yóu | freedom |
| | zì bēi | inferiority complex; self-abased | 自愿 | zì yuàn | voluntarily |
| 自动 | zì dòng | automatic | 自来水 | zì lái shuǐ | tap water |
| 自杀 | zì shā | commit suicide | 自暴自弃 | zì bào zì qì | self-forsaking |
| 自首 | zì shǒu | give oneself up | 自告奋勇 | zì gào fèn yǒng | volunteer one's service |
| 自传 | zì zhuàn | autobiography | 自高自大 | zì gāo zì dà | conceited; egoistic |
| 自己 | zì jǐ | oneself | 自食其力 | zì shí qí lì | self-supporting |
| 自立 | zì lì | independent | 自相矛盾 | zì xiāng máo dùn | self-contradiction |
| 自满 | zì mǎn | complacent | | | |

Example:

他很自私。

Tā hěn zì sī.

It means, "He is very selfish."

齒 (齒) CHǐ
teeth



The evolutionary struggle of this character sees man fighting a losing battle. Earliest forms show the mouth filled with teeth: and later only the front teeth: . The regular form: has the teeth sharpened and capped by the phonetic: . The simplified version: drastically reduces the remaining teeth to one. But, with all that loss, man can still console himself that many a true word is spoken through false teeth.



| | | |
|----|-----------|---------------|
| 齿轮 | chǐ lún | gear-wheel |
| 齿腔 | chǐ qiāng | dental cavity |
| 齿痛 | chǐ tòng | toothache |

| | | |
|----|---------|----------|
| 齿龈 | chǐ yín | the gums |
| 牙齿 | yá chǐ | tooth |

Example:

他 的 牙 齿 痛 。

Tā de yá chǐ tòng.

It means, "He has a toothache."

止

ZHÌ

halt; stop

Although this character is a crude representation of the motionless foot, with the five toes reduced to three, it does not stand for "foot". Its meanings are derived by extension and include: to halt, stop or stand still. Our illustration shows how, in an emergency, the foot can come in handy to express the idea of "Stop!"



PENG

止

止步
止境
止渴
止咳
止痛
止血

zhǐ bù
zhǐ jìng
zhǐ kě
zhǐ kē
zhǐ tòng
zhǐ xuè

halt; stop
limit; end
quench thirst
relieve a cough
allay pains
stop bleeding

止咳药
停止
终止
望梅止渴

zhǐ ké yào
tíng zhǐ
zhōng zhǐ

cough mixture
halt; stop
put an end to;
cease
gaze at plums
to quench one's
thirst; vain hopes

Example:

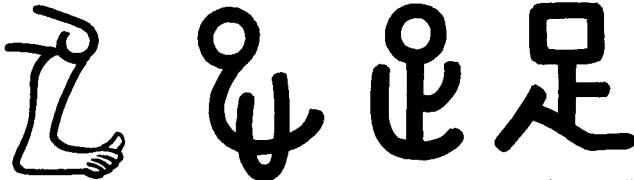
酸梅可以止渴。
Suān méi kě yǐ zhǐ kě

It means, "Sour plums can quench your thirst."

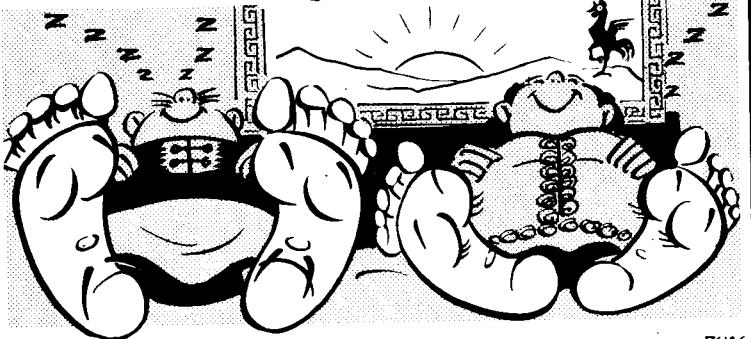
足

ZÚ

foot



The character: 足 apparently pictures the knee-cap: 𧈧 resting on the foot: 𧈧. The full circle: 𧈧 suggests completion and rest, as opposed to motion. The modern form: 足, signifying foot at rest, is applicable to feet in general. And feet are generally at rest, as our example shows.



PENG

丨 冂 口 𠂔 𠂔 足 足

| | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 足够 | zú gòu | enough |
| 足迹 | zú jī | footprint |
| 足金 | zú jīn | pure gold |
| 足球 | zú qiú | soccer; football |
| 足下 | zú xià | polite form of address between friends |

| | | |
|------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 足球队 | zú qiú duì | soccer team |
| 足球迷 | zú qiú mí | soccer fan |
| 满足 | mǎn zú | satisfied; satisfy |
| 手足情深 | shǒu zú qíng shēn | brotherly affection |

Example:

他 喜 欢 看 足 球 赛 。

Tā xǐ huān kàn zú qiú sài.

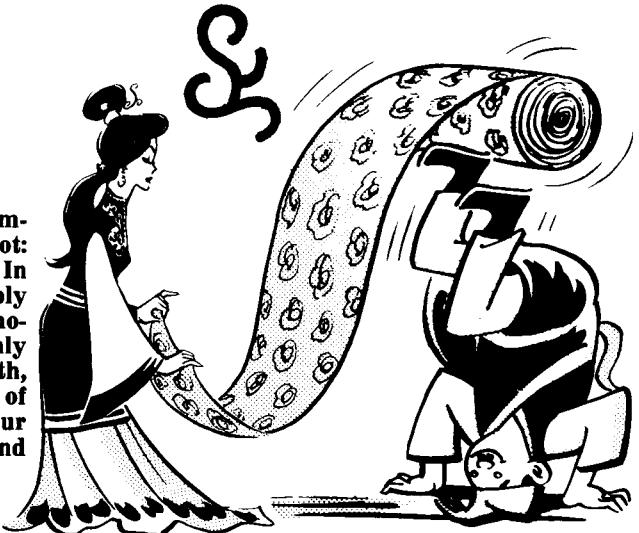
It means, "He likes to watch football matches."

疋

PÍ

piece of cloth;
bale or roll

This character: 疋 has an uncompleted circle: 乚 flowing into a foot: 乚, signifying the foot in motion. In this sense, it is now obsolete - probably because feet today are seldom in motion. The character is now mainly applied to a bale, bolt or roll of cloth, which is undone by a regular motion of turning it over and over again. Our picture illustrates both obsolete and modern meanings of 疋.



PENG

一 丁 下 丂 疋

疋头

pí tóu

piece goods

一疋布

yī pí bù

one piece of cloth

Example:

她买了一疋布。

Tā mǎi le yī pí bù.

It means, "She bought a piece of cloth."

步

Bù

step;
pace



步

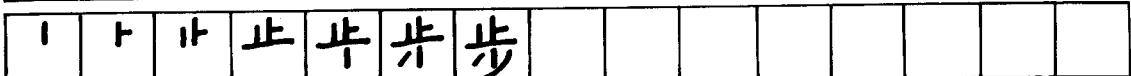
步

步



This character for "step" or "pace" is an ideograph of a right foot and a left foot, one following the other in close succession, graphically conveying the idea of walking or taking steps. Such steps, however, could be in the wrong direction; our picture presents a good example of this.

PENG



步兵

bù bīng

infantry

步步

bù bù

step by step

步调

bù diào

pace or speed (in walking or running)

步伐

bù fá

pace

步法

bù fǎ

footwork

步枪

bù qiāng

rifle

步行

bù xíng

go on foot

步骤

bù zhòu

move; measure

步步高升

bù bù gāo shēng

rise step by step
(promotions)

进步

jìng bù

progress; improve

跑步

pǎo bù

jog

散步

sàn bù

take a stroll

Example:

他的功课进步得很快。

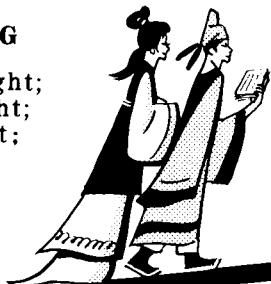
Tā de gōng kè jìn bù de hěn kuài.

It means, "His lessons have improved rapidly."

正

ZHÈNG

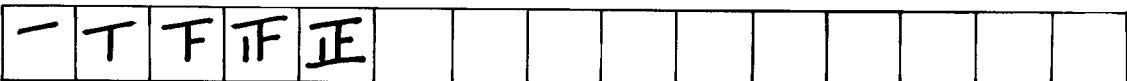
straight;
upright;
correct;
exact



The character: 正 shows a foot: 止 (meaning "stop") with a straight line above it. It signifies arrival and stopping (止) at the line or proper limit (一) without going astray. It is also an ideograph of a foot walking in a straight line: 正. Hence the extended meanings: straight, upright, proper, correct, exact.



PENG



| | | |
|----|-------------|------------------|
| 正常 | zhèng cháng | normal |
| 正当 | zhèng dāng | proper; rightful |
| 正派 | zhèng pài | upright; decent |
| 正确 | zhèng què | correct; right |
| 正式 | zhèng shì | official |
| 正统 | zhèng tǒng | orthodox |
| 正义 | zhèng yì | justice |

| | | |
|------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 正月 | zhèng yuè | January |
| 正常化 | zhèng cháng huà | normalize |
| 正规军 | zhèng guī jūn | regular army |
| 改正 | gǎi zhèng | correct |
| 纠正 | jiū zhèng | amend; correct |
| 改邪归正 | gǎi xié guī zhèng | turn over a new leaf |

Example:

那犯人已改邪归正。

Nà fàn rén yǐ gǎi xié guī zhèng.

It means, "That convict has turned over a new leaf."

是

SHÌ

right; yes;
am, are, is

是 日 正 是

This ideograph locates the sun: 日 over the character for right or correct: 正 (modified to 是). It depicts the sun: 日 exactly on the meridian: 是. The sun is here taken as the standard for correctness. Hence the idea of "right; yes; am, are, is."



PENG

是 是 是 是 是 是 是 是

| | | |
|----|---------|-----------------|
| 是的 | shì de | yes; right |
| 是非 | shì fēi | right and wrong |
| 是否 | shì fǒu | whether or not? |
| 是故 | shì gù | for this reason |
| 不是 | bù shì | not so |

Example:

这把雨伞不是我的。

Zhè bǎ yǔ sǎn bù shì wǒ de.

It means, "This umbrella is not mine."

走

ZOU

walk;
run;
hasten;
depart

In the original seal form: 走 the upper part: 夂 (or 土) represents a man: 大 bending his head: / forward to walk rapidly. The lower part: 止 (or 止) means "to stop." This combination of bending and stopping indicates walking. The movement is also suggested by the bending: 夂 (土) of the toes or foot: 止 (止) in swift walking. Pictured here are a host of characters - walking, running, fleeing - all bending forward but not stopping.

走走走



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | + | 土 | 牛 | ヰ | ヰ | 走 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|---------------------------|------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 走动 | zǒu dòng | move around | 走失 | zǒu shī | be lost |
| 走访 | zǒu fǎng | have an interview with | 走兽 | zǒu shòu | beast |
| 走狗 | zǒu gǒu | running dog; lackey | 走向 | zǒu xiàng | walk towards |
| 走廊 | zǒu láng | corridor | 走样 | zǒu yàng | change in shape |
| 走漏 | zǒu lòu | leak out (secret) | 走卒 | zǒu zú | lackey |
| 走路 | zǒu lù | walk | 走漏风声 | zǒu lòu fēng shēng | leak out a secret |
| 走私 | zǒu sī | smuggling | 走马看花 | zǒu mǎ kàn huā | taking a hurried glance |

Example:

他 走 路 去 学 校 。

Tā zǒu lù qù xué xiào.

It means, "He walks to school."

土

TU

earth;
soil;
ground

土
土
土



Man has always been dependent on the ground for subsistence. To him, earth (土) is represented by its two layers (二) - the topsoil and subsoil - from which growing plants sprout (一). Hence 土: the good earth that produces all things for man. Pictured here are some such "earthy" provisions.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 十 | 土 | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

土产

tǔ chǎn

local commodities
(natural pro-
duces)

土地

tǔ dì

land

土匪

tǔ fěi

bandit

土话

tǔ huà

local dialect

土壤

tǔ rǎng

soil

土人

tǔ rén

native

土质

tǔ zhì

property of soil

土包子

tǔ bāo zi

country bumpkin

土耳其

Tǔ Ěr Qí

Turkey

土木工程

Tǔ mù gōng

civil engineering

泥土

ní tǔ

soil, earth

Example:

这是一块肥沃的土地。

Zhè shì yí kuài féi wò de tǔ dì.

It means, "This piece of land is fertile."

坐

ZUÒ

to sit;
a seat

坐, the ideograph for “sit”, depicts two men talking face-to-face (人人), sitting on the ground (土) but not quite down-to-earth. Although the radical 土 (earth) provides the base for the men (人人) to “sit” (坐) on, it can prove to be the root of unproductive activity, as illustrated.



PENG

| 人 人 人 人 人 半 坐

| | | |
|------|--------------|------------------|
| 坐牢 | zuò láo | be imprisoned |
| 坐落 | zuò luò | locate; situate |
| 坐视 | zuò shì | sit by and watch |
| 坐位 | zuò wèi | seat |
| 坐下 | zuò xià | sit down |
| 坐立不安 | zuò lì bù ān | be fidgety |

| | | |
|------|--------------|------------------|
| 坐牢 | zuò láo | be imprisoned |
| 坐落 | zuò luò | locate; situate |
| 坐视 | zuò shì | sit by and watch |
| 坐位 | zuò wèi | seat |
| 坐下 | zuò xià | sit down |
| 坐立不安 | zuò lì bù ān | be fidgety |

| | | |
|------|--------------------|---|
| 坐井观天 | zuò jǐng guān tiān | (literally) see the sky from the bottom of a well—take a narrow view of |
| 请坐 | qǐng zuò | please sit down |

Example:

他请客人坐下。

Tā qǐng kè rén zuò xià

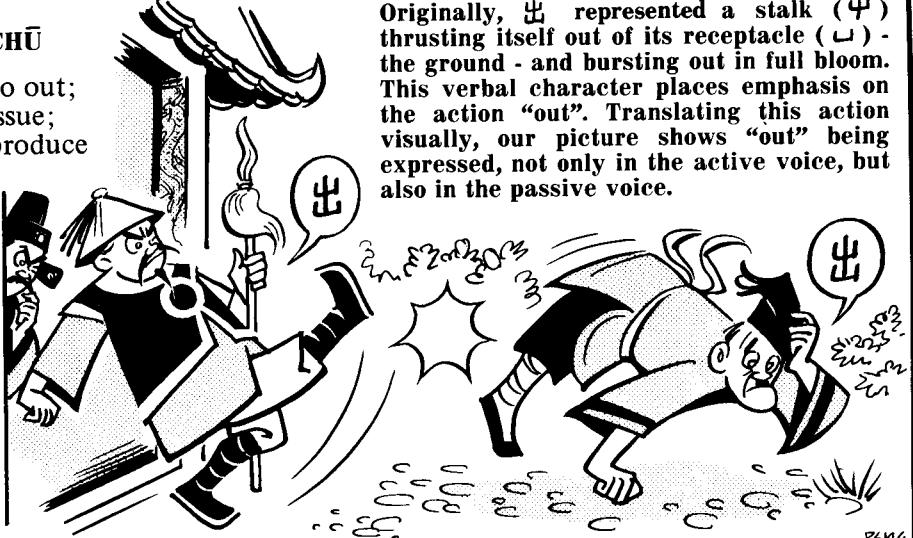
It means, “He invited the guest to sit down.”

出

CHŪ

go out;
issue;
produce

出 出 出 出



Originally, 出 represented a stalk (屮) thrusting itself out of its receptacle (匚)-the ground - and bursting out in full bloom. This verbal character places emphasis on the action "out". Translating this action visually, our picture shows "out" being expressed, not only in the active voice, but also in the passive voice.

PENG

出 出

| | | |
|----|----------|------------------------|
| 出版 | chū bǎn | publish |
| 出产 | chū chǎn | produce |
| 出丑 | chū chǒu | make a fool of oneself |
| 出国 | chū guó | go abroad |
| 出境 | chū jìng | leave a country |
| 出口 | chū kǒu | export |
| 出来 | chū lái | come out |
| 出卖 | chū mài | betray |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 出门 | chū mén | be away from home |
| 出去 | chū qù | go out |
| 出身 | chū shēn | family background |
| 出现 | chū xiān | appear; emerge |
| 出乎意料 | chū hū yì liào | unexpected |
| 出人头地 | chū rén tóu dì | stand above others |
| 出生入死 | chū shēng rù sǐ | go through thick and thin |

Example:

他 出 版 了 一 本 书 。

Tā chū bǎn le yì běn shū.

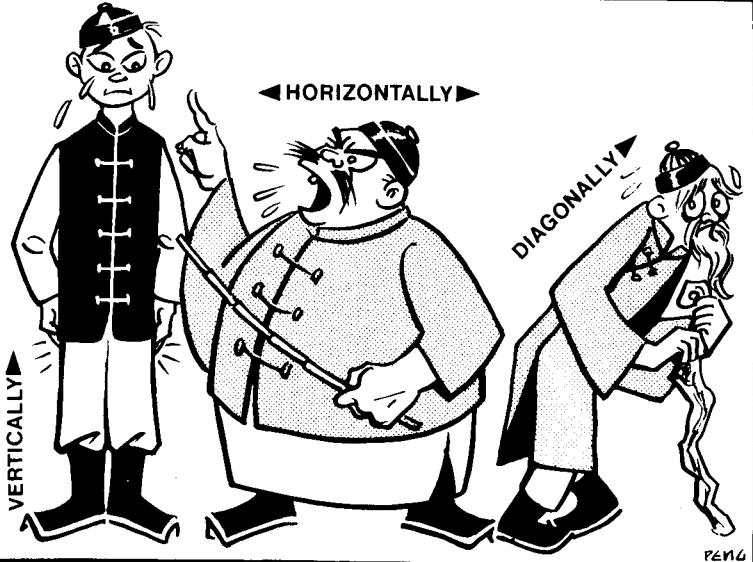
It means, "He has published a book."



SHĒNG

produce;
bear;
grow

The earth (土), producing a plant (生), lays the groundwork for growth (生). Hence the modified form: 生, meaning to produce, bear or grow. Man, born imperfect, grows in different ways and directions. Pictured here are examples from three generations.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 丨 | 丨 | 丨 | 牛 | 生 | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | | |
|----|------------|------------|------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 生病 | shēng bìng | fall ill | 生疏 | shēng shū | unfamiliar |
| 生存 | shēng cún | survive | 生物 | shēng wù | biology |
| 生动 | shēng dòng | vivid | 生效 | shēng xiào | become effective |
| 生活 | shēng huó | livelihood | 生意 | shēng yì | business |
| 生理 | shēng lǐ | physiology | 生硬 | shēng yìng | rigid |
| 生命 | shēng mìng | life | 生长 | shēng zhǎng | grow up |
| 生气 | shēng qì | angry | 生气勃勃 | shēng qì bó bó | full of vigour and vitality |
| 生日 | shēng rì | birthday | | | |

Example:

明天是她的生日。

Míng tiān shì tā de shēng rì.

It means, "Tomorrow is her birthday."

姓

XÌNG

surname

The character 姓, comprising 女 (woman) and 生 (born), literally means: “born of woman”. It suggests that in some remote, forgotten era man, born of woman, got his name from the mother. Hence 姓: “surname”. We introduce here Mama Li's (李) family from the remote past, but we've forgotten Papa's insignificant surname.



PENG

姓 女 女 女 姓 姓 姓

姓名

xìng míng

surname and name

姓谱

xìng pǔ

genealogical record;
family register

姓氏

xìng shì

surname

百姓

bǎi xìng

common people

贵姓

guì xìng

what is your

surname?

Example:

请问您姓什么？

Qǐng wèn nín xìng shé me?

It means, “What is your surname, please?”

贝

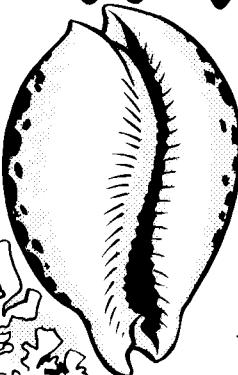
(貝) BÈI

shells;
valuables

This character is a pictograph of the precious cowrie shell. Used in early feudal times as money, it came to mean also "valuables". The regular form (貝) shows a live shell with feelers; but today, like the money it once represented, the shell reveals its hollowness in the simplified form (贝).



貝 貝 貝 貝



PENG

丨𠂔贝贝

贝雕
贝壳
贝类
贝玉

bèi diāo
bèi kè
bèi lèi
bèi yù

shell carving
shell
shellfish
valuables; gems

贝子
宝贝

bèi zǐ
bǎo bēi

cowries—used as
currency in
ancient times
precious; darling

Example:

这贝壳很美。

Zhè bèi kè hěn měi.

It means, "This shell is very beautiful."

贱(賤)

JIÀN cheap; mean; worthless

Two spears: 货 shattering and destroying the value of shells: 贝, once used as money, conveys the idea of cheap, worthless, mean or humble. Man applied this word to anything of little value, uttering the proverbial saying: "Cheap things are of little value; valuable things are not cheap". In mock humility, he applied it also to himself.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| I | 𠂔 | 贝 | 贝 | 贝 | 贝 | 贝 | 贱 | 贱 | 贱 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|

| | | |
|-------|---------------|---|
| 贱价 | jiàn jià | cheap; low-priced |
| 贱卖 | jiàn mài | cheap-sale |
| 贱物(货) | jiàn wù (huò) | cheap and common things; inferior quality goods |

| | | |
|-----|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 贫贱 | pín jiàn | poor and humble |
| 贱骨头 | jiàn gǔ tóu | miserable (or contemptible) wretch |

Example:

她出生贫贱。

Tā chū shēng pín jiàn.

It means, "She comes from a poor and humble family."

贵 (貴)

GUÌ
expensive;
dear;
honourable

A basket or container: 虫 (or 虍) filled with precious cowries: 貝 (once used as money) means dear or expensive. By extension, it also means high-class or honourable. In this connection, humble self (贱) thanks honourable readers (貴) for their appreciation and interest in the Bilingual Page.



PENG



| | | | | | |
|----|----------|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|----------------------|
| 贵宾 | guì bīn | guest of honour | 贵人 | guì rén | distinguished person |
| 贵妇 | guì fù | noblewoman | 贵姓 | guì xìng | your name, please |
| 贵国 | guì guó | your nation (a polite expression) | 贵重 | guì zhòng | valuable; precious |
| 贵贱 | guì jiàn | the eminent and the humble | 贵族 | guì zú | aristocrat; noble |
| | | | 宝贵 | bǎo guì | precious |

Example:

英国有许多贵族人家。

Yīng Guó yǒu xǔ duō guì zú rén jiā.

It means, "There are many aristocratic families in England."

买(買) MAI

buy

This ideograph is made up of a net: 网 (modified from 穴) and shells: 贝 (money-cowrie). 買 means to buy, i.e., net of (网) goods, paying the price in cowries (贝). This is often done with bargain offers. The simplified form: 买 offered in place of the regular form: 買 may not seem quite a bargain, but we'll buy it.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 二 | 三 | 手 | 买 | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

买方

mǎi fāng

buyer

买好

mǎi hǎo

try to win somebody's favour

买价

mǎi jià

buying price

买卖

mǎi mài

buying and selling

买通

mǎi tōng

bribe; buy over

买主

mǎi zhǔ

buyer

买空卖空

mǎi kōng mài

speculate (in stocks, etc.)

kōng

Example:

他 是 这 辆 新 车 的 买 主 。

Tā shì zhè liàng xīn chē de mǎi zhǔ.

It means, "He is the buyer of this new car."

卖 (賣) MÀI

sell

賣 is derived by loading 買 (the business of netting in cowries) with 壴 (out, a contraction of 出). Hence 賣 means to sell, i.e., to put out or push (出 or 售) goods and netting in (网 or 网) cowrie-money (貝). Our picture exposes the fishy business of pushing and netting.



PENG

一 十 土 午 千 卖

| | | |
|----|-----------|----------------------|
| 卖唱 | mài chàng | sing for a living |
| 卖方 | mài fāng | seller |
| 卖国 | mài guó | betray one's country |
| 卖价 | mài jià | selling price |
| 卖力 | mài lì | spare no effort |
| 卖命 | mài mìng | sweat one's guts out |
| 卖弄 | mài nòng | show off |
| 卖笑 | mài xiào | prostitution |

| | | |
|-----|--------------|--|
| 卖艺 | mài yì | make a living as a performer |
| 卖淫 | mài yín | prostitution |
| 卖国贼 | mài guó zéi | traitor |
| 卖人情 | mài rén qíng | grant a favour |
| 卖身契 | mài shēn qì | indenture by which one sells oneself or family |
| 出卖 | chū mài | betray |
| 非卖品 | fēi mài pǐn | not for sale |
| 拍卖 | pāi mài | sale by auction |

Example:

他出卖了自己的哥哥。

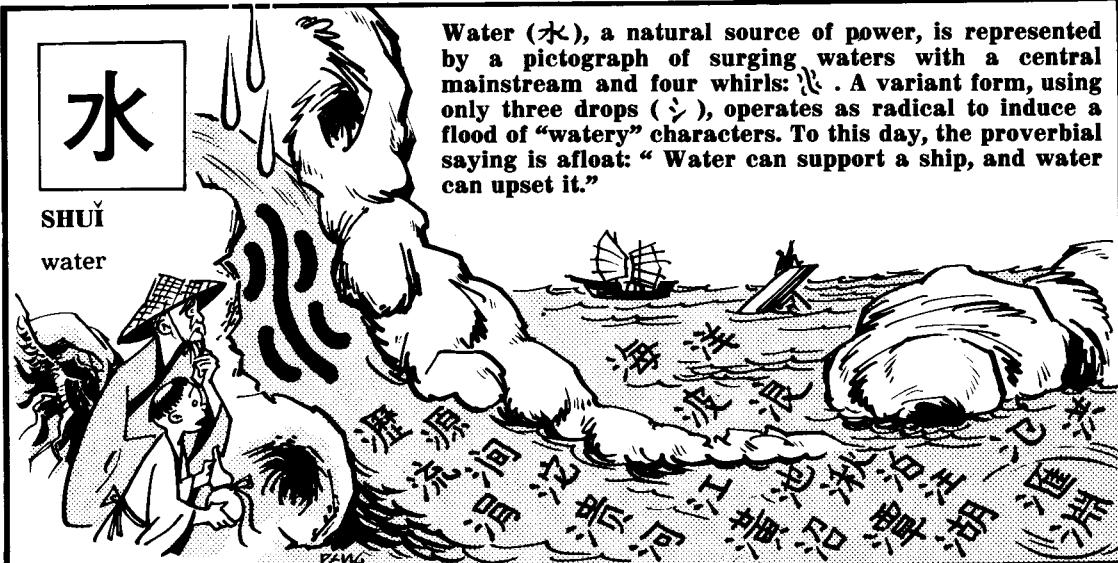
Tā chū mài le zì jǐ de gē ge

It means, "He has betrayed his own brother."

水

SHUǐ
water

Water (水), a natural source of power, is represented by a pictograph of surging waters with a central mainstream and four whirls: 氵. A variant form, using only three drops (氵), operates as radical to induce a flood of “watery” characters. To this day, the proverbial saying is afloat: “Water can support a ship, and water can upset it.”



冫 氵 水 水

| | | |
|----|-----------|----------------|
| 水彩 | shuǐ cǎi | water colour |
| 水池 | shuǐ chí | pond; pool |
| 水沟 | shuǐ gōu | drain; ditch |
| 水管 | shuǐ guǎn | water pipe |
| 水果 | shuǐ guǒ | fruit |
| 水库 | shuǐ kù | reservoir; dam |
| 水泥 | shuǐ ní | cement |
| 水手 | shuǐ shǒu | sailor; seaman |
| 水塔 | shuǐ tǎ | water tower |

| | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 水星 | Shuǐ Xīng | Mercury |
| 水银 | shuǐ yín | mercury |
| 水灾 | shuǐ zāi | flood |
| 水龙头 | shuǐ lóng tóu | tap; faucet |
| 水深火热 | shuǐ shēn huǒ rè | (figuratively) an abyss of suffering |
| 水蒸气 | shuǐ zhēng qì | steam |
| 水泄不通 | shuǐ xiè bù tōng | (figuratively) very crowded |
| 喝水 | hē shuǐ | drink water |

Example:

吃水果对身体有益。

Chī shuǐ guǒ duì shēn dǐ yǒu yì.

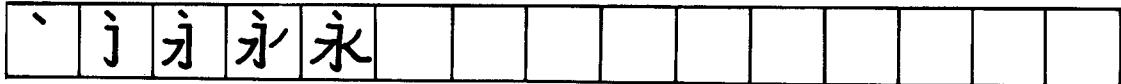
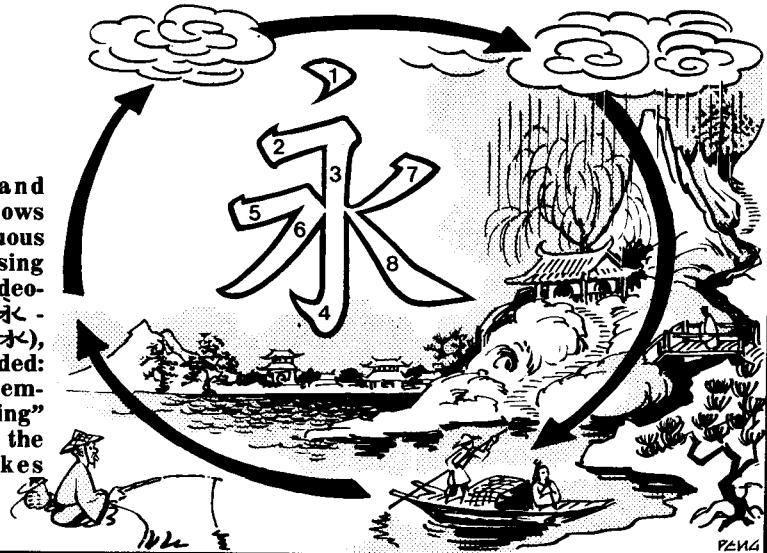
It means, “Eating fruits is good for our health.”

永

Yǒng

everlasting;
perpetual;
forever

One generation comes and another goes, but water flows on incessantly in a continuous cycle. From this unceasing flow of water came the ideograph for "everlasting": 永 - a variation of water (水), with foams and ripples added: 永. 永 will long be remembered as the "everlasting" character that embodies the eight fundamental strokes used in calligraphy.



| | | |
|------|------------------|----------------------|
| 永生 | yǒng shēng | eternal life |
| 永远 | yǒng yuǎn | forever; everlasting |
| 永不分离 | yǒng bù fēn lí | inseparable |
| 永垂不朽 | yǒng chuí bù xiǔ | eternal glory |

| | | |
|----|-----------|----------------------|
| 永别 | yǒng bié | part forever |
| 永不 | yǒng bù | never |
| 永固 | yǒng gù | permanently fixed |
| 永恒 | yǒng héng | eternal; everlasting |
| 永久 | yǒng jiǔ | permanent |

Example:

他们 的 爱 情 是 永 恒 的。

Tā men de ài qíng shì yǒng héng de.

It means, "Their love is everlasting."

冰 (氷) BÍNG

ice

The character for ice was originally: 冂, representing cracks or crystals on the surface of ice. The radical 冂 depicts water dripping and freezing into an icicle. 冂 was added to 水 (water) to freeze and crystallize it into “frozen water” or ice: 冰. Our illustration applies 冰 figuratively, contrasting icy coldness with fiery passion.



氂 冂 冰 冰 冰

| | | |
|----|------------|------------|
| 冰雹 | bīng báo | hailstones |
| 冰川 | bīng chuān | glacier |
| 冰岛 | bīng dǎo | Iceland |
| 冰冻 | bīng dòng | freeze |
| 冰块 | bīng kuài | ice-cube |
| 冰冷 | bīng lěng | ice-cold |
| 冰凉 | bīng liáng | ice-cold |

| | | |
|------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 冰山 | bīng shān | iceberg |
| 冰水 | bīng shuǐ | ice-water |
| 冰箱 | bīng xiāng | refrigerator |
| 冰淇淋 | bīng qí lín | ice-cream |
| 冰上运动 | bīng shàng yùn dòng | ice-sports |
| 冰天雪地 | bīng tiān xuě dì | a world of ice and snow |

Example:

她 喜 欢 吃 冰 淇 淋 。

Tā xǐ huān chī bīng qí lín.

It means, “She likes ice-cream.”

泉

QUÁN

spring;
fountain

The early forms:  and  show water gushing out from a mountain spring. The modern form: , distilled from 白 (pure) and 水 (water), symbolizes the fountain or spring - source of pure, wholesome drinking water and the inspired expression: "When you drink water, think of the mountain spring (or source)." PENG



泉 泉 泉 泉 泉 泉 泉 泉 泉 泉

泉水

quán shuǐ

spring water

源泉

quán yuán

source of spring;
source

喷泉

pēn quán

fountain

Example:

这个喷泉很美。

Zhè gè pēn quán hěn měi.

It means, "This is a very beautiful fountain."

雨

YU

rain

雨, the character for rain, is a picture of raindrops (=) falling vertically down (丨) from a cloud (匚) in the heavens (一). Not all welcome the rain as showers of blessing from heaven for, as the saying goes, "The farmer hopes for rain, the traveller for fine weather."



PENG

一 一 丂 而 雨 雨 雨 雨

雨点
雨季
雨量
雨伞
雨水
雨天
雨衣

yǔ diǎn
yǔ jì
yǔ liàng
yǔ sǎn
yǔ shuǐ
yǔ tiān
yǔ yī

raindrop
rainy season
rainfall
umbrella
rain water
rainy day
raincoat

| | | |
|------|------------------|--|
| 雨过天晴 | yǔ guò tiān qíng | the sun shines again after the rain |
| 雨后春笋 | yǔ hòu chūn sǔn | (spring up like) bamboo shoots after a spring rain |
| 下雨 | xìa yǔ | raining |

Example:

下雨了，快进来吧！

Xià yǔ le, kuài jìn lái ba!

It means, "It's raining, come in quickly!"

漏

LÒU

leak

The original character 扁 places rain 雨 under roof 戸 (abbreviation of 屋, house), enforcing the idea of "leak" - rain seeping through the roof into the house. The modern form reinforces the concept by adding more water in the form of the radical: 氵 (water): 漏.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| . | : | 氵 | 江 | 沪 | 沪 | 沪 | 漏 | 漏 | 漏 | 漏 | 漏 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|

| | | |
|----|-----------|------------------------|
| 漏电 | lòu diàn | leakage of electricity |
| 漏洞 | lòu dòng | flaw; loophole |
| 漏斗 | lòu dǒu | funnel for liquids |
| 漏风 | lòu fēng | air leak |
| 漏光 | lòu guāng | light leak |

| | | |
|------|------------------|----------------------|
| 漏税 | lòu shuì | evade taxation |
| 漏雨 | lòu yǔ | rain leaking through |
| 漏风声 | lòu fēng shēng | leak out a secret |
| 漏洞百出 | lòu dòng bǎi chū | full of loopholes |
| 失漏 | shī lòu | lose track of |

Example:

他漏了一条重要新闻。

Tā lòu le yì tiáo zhòng yào xīn wén.

It means, "He missed an important piece of news."

云

(雲) YÚN
cloud

When the humid and warm vapours (氵 or 𠂔) rise (上 or 二) and reach the colder regions, they condense and form clouds: 云. Loading the clouds (云) with rain (雨) produces the regular form: 雲. The simplified version relieves the clouds (雲) of their load, reverting the character to its original form: 云.



P244

一 二 云 云

| | | |
|----|----------|---------------------------|
| 云彩 | yún cǎi | cloud |
| 云层 | yún céng | layers of cloud |
| 云集 | yún jí | gather together in crowds |
| 云外 | yún wài | beyond the clouds |
| 云雾 | yún wù | mist; fog |
| 云霞 | yún xiá | rosy clouds |
| 云霄 | yún xiāo | the skies |
| 云烟 | yún yān | cloud and mist |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|---|
| 云消雾散 | yún xiāo wù sàn | the clouds have cleared and the mist dispersed—(figuratively) troubles have been cleared up |
| 白云 | bái yún | white clouds |
| 浮云 | fú yún | passing cloud |
| 乌云满布 | wū yún mǎn bù | black clouds gather in the sky |

Example:

天上有朵朵白云。

Tiān shàng yǒu duǒ duǒ bái yún.

It means, "Billows of white clouds float in the sky."

雪

XUÉ

snow

The seal character 雨 associates rain 雨 with broom 豐. The modern character 雪 relates rain 雨 to hand 扌 (a contraction of 豐, broom). Both versions fittingly symbolize snow, i.e., rain 雨 which can be taken up in the hand (扌) or swept away by a broom (豐).

雪



PIAN



| | | |
|----|-----------|----------------|
| 雪白 | xuě bái | snow-white |
| 雪崩 | xuě bēng | snowslide |
| 雪恨 | xuě hèn | avenge |
| 雪花 | xuě huā | snowflake |
| 雪茄 | xuě jiā | cigar |
| 雪景 | xuě jǐng | snow scenery |
| 雪亮 | xuě liàng | bright as snow |

| | | |
|------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| 雪球 | xuě qiú | snowball |
| 雪人 | xuě rén | snowman |
| 雪山 | xuě shān | snow-covered mountain |
| 雪花膏 | xuě huā gāo | vanishing cream |
| 雪中送炭 | xuě zhōng sòng tàn | (figuratively) timely assistance |
| 下雪 | xìa xuě | to snow |

Example:

冬天，小孩子喜欢造雪人。

Dōng tiān, xiǎo hái zi xǐ huān zào xuě rén.

It means, "In winter, children like to make snowmen."

电

(電)

DIAN lightning; electricity

A streak of lightning (电) amidst the falling rain (雨) forged the character for lightning 電. Lightning being a visible discharge of electricity, 電 came to mean also electricity. 電 takes the path of least resistance, discharging eight of its thirteen strokes to transform itself into the simplified form: 电.

電 電 電 電



PEHUA

| 亼 口 口 曰 电

| | | |
|----|-----------|------------------|
| 电报 | diàn bào | telegram; cable |
| 电池 | diàn chí | battery |
| 电工 | diàn gōng | electrician |
| 电话 | diàn huà | telephone |
| 电流 | diàn liú | electric current |
| 电脑 | diàn nǎo | computer |
| 电视 | diàn shì | television |
| 电梯 | diàn tī | elevator |
| 电线 | diàn xiàn | wire; cable |

| | | |
|-------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 电讯 | diàn xùn | telegraphic message |
| 电影 | diàn yǐng | movie-show; film |
| 电唱机 | diàn chàng jī | record player |
| 电单车 | diàn dān chē | motorcycle |
| 电子计算机 | diàn zǐ jì suàn jī | electronic calculator |
| 手电筒 | shǒu diàn tǒng | torch |
| 无线电 | wú xiàn diàn | wireless |

Example:

他 喜 欢 骑 电 单 车 。

Tā xǐ huan qí diàn dān chē.

It means, "He likes riding motorcycle."

雷

LÉI

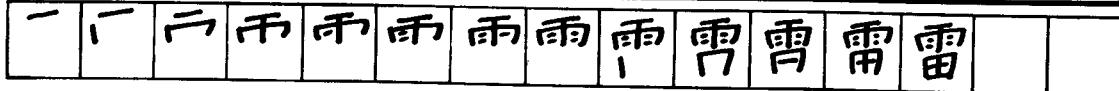
thunder

From experience, man knows that rain clouds (雨) over his fields (田) means thunder. 雷, the voice of lightning. The original version of 雷 has three or four fields (畠) incorporated in a graphic pattern to express the reverberation of thunder. To man, thunder is impressive, but it is lightning that does the work.



"The thunder roars loudly,
but little rain falls."

PENG



雷达
雷击

léi dá
léi jī

radar
be struck by
lightning
thunderous
thunderclap
thunderstorm
radar service
network

雷鸣
雷声
雷雨
雷达网

léi míng
léi shēng
léi yǔ
léi dá wǎng

雷同前人

léi tóng qián rén
mere follower
of predecessors

打雷

dǎ léi

to thunder

地雷

dì léi

land-mine

水雷

shuǐ léi

sea-mine

鱼雷

yú léi

torpedo

鱼雷艇

yú léi tǐng

torpedo boat

大发雷霆

dà fā léi tíng

fly into a rage

Example:

管工对工人大发雷霆。

Gǎn gōng duì gōng rén dà fā léi tíng.

It means, "The supervisor flies into a rage at the workers."

傘

(傘)

SĀN

umbrella

傘 is a pictograph of an umbrella. Its radical: 人 (man) has nothing to do with the original character: 伞. Nevertheless, the regular form: 伞 seems to be harbouring four persons (众) not included in the simplified version: 伞. Under cover of the umbrella, man counsels for the rainy day: "When the sky is clear, carry an umbrella; though your stomach is full, carry provisions."



PENG

ノ 人 人 人 人 傘

伞兵

sǎn bīng

paratroop;
parachuter

雨伞

yǔ sǎn

umbrella

降落伞

jiàng luò sǎn

parachute

Example:

快要下雨了，记得带一把雨伞。

Kuài yào xià yǔ le, jì de dài yì bǎ yǔ sǎn.

It means, "It's going to rain. Don't forget to bring an umbrella."

川

CHUĀN

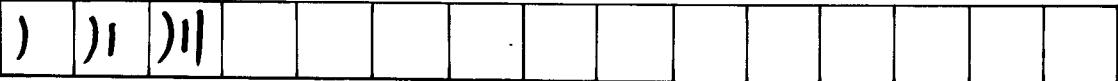
river;
stream

川

"The great river does not reject little stream." As the river meanders through arid land, infusing life into the fields, it is continually fed by little streams. Fittingly, the river is portrayed as flowing water formed by the union of little streams, upon which it vitally depends: 川 . The modern independent form: 川 uses a variant: 川 to serve as source for other related characters.



PENG



| | | |
|------|-----------------|---|
| 川资 | chuān zī | travelling expenses |
| 川流不息 | chuān liú bù xī | uninterrupted flow; continuous flow |
| 四川 | Sì Chuān | Sichuan, China |

Example:

路上车辆川流不息。

Lù shàng chē liàng chuān liú bù xī.

It means, "There is a continuous flow of traffic on the road."

山

SHĀN

mountain;
hill



A mountain range, with three towering peaks, provides the structure for this pictograph of mountain or hill: 山. From a high vantage point, man is able to oversee what is easily overlooked on a lower plane. Hence the proverb: "If you don't climb the high mountain, you can't view the plain."



PENG

| 山 山

| | | |
|----|------------|----------------------|
| 山川 | shān chuān | mountains and rivers |
| 山峰 | shān fēng | summit of a mountain |
| 山东 | Shān Dōng | Shandong, China |
| 山顶 | shān dǐng | mountain top |
| 山歌 | shān gē | folk song |
| 山谷 | shān gǔ | valley |
| 山脉 | shān mài | mountain range |
| 山坡 | shān pō | hill slope |
| 山头 | shān tóu | hilltop |

| | | |
|------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 山西 | Shān Xī | Shanxi, China |
| 山崖 | shān yá | cliff |
| 山盟海誓 | shān méng hǎi shì | solemn oath |
| 山明水秀 | shān míng shuǐ xiù | beautiful scenery |
| 山穷水尽 | shān qióng shuǐ jìn | circumstances of extreme need |
| 山珍海味 | shān zhēn hǎi wèi | delicacies |

Example:

他被山明水秀的西湖迷住了。

Tā bèi shān míng shuǐ xiù de Xī Hú mí zhù le.

It means, "He was enchanted by the beautiful scenery of the West Lake."

鸟

(鳥) NIÃO
bird

The regular form: 鳥 is a representation of a long-tailed bird, flaunting its beauty and revelling in its freedom. Unfortunately, beauty has not always been an asset to the bird for, as the saying goes, "It's the beautiful bird that we put in the cage." Tragically, the simplified form sees the poor bird stripped of its plumage: 鸟.



鸟

鸟巢
鸟瞰
鸟类
鸟笼
鸟兽
鸟爪

niǎn cháo
niǎo kàn
niǎo lèi
niǎo lóng
niǎo shòu
niǎo zhǎo

bird's nest
bird's eye view
birds
bird cage
birds and animals
bird's claws

鸟语花香
小鸟

niǎo yǔ huā
xiǎo niǎo

birds sing and
flowers give forth
their fragrance—
characterizing a
fine spring day
small bird

Example:

你 家 里 有 养 鸟 吗 ?

Nǐ jiā lǐ yǒu yǎng niǎo ma?

It means, "Do you rear birds at home?"

島

(島)

Sea-birds often nest on mountainous rocks that emerge from the sea. Hence a bird (鳥) over a mountain (山) gave the concept for island: 島 . The ancient form shows a bird hovering over a mountain, with feet visible: 島 . The modern version has the bird settling on it, with feet hidden: 島 , probably hatching the simplified character: 岛 .

Dǎo

island



PENG

岛 岛 岛 岛 岛 岛

| | | |
|----|---------|--------------|
| 岛国 | dǎo guó | island state |
| 岛屿 | dǎo yǔ | islands |
| 半岛 | bàn dǎo | peninsula |
| 群岛 | qún dǎo | archipelago |

Example:

新加 坡 是 一 个 岛 国 。

Xīn Jiā Pō shì yí gè dǎo guó.

It means, "Singapore is an island state."

鸟

(鳥)

WŪ crow

The saying: "The crow does not roost with the phoenix" sums up man's attitude towards the lowly carrion crow, regarded as a bird of ill omen. The character for crow: 鳥 is similar to that for bird: 鳥, with the stroke for the eyes omitted, probably because black eyes are not readily visible against black feathers. Even the unflattering simplified version: 鸟 cannot blacken the image of this miserable bird, for crows are already black all over the world.



PENG

鸟 鸟 鸟

乌龟
乌黑
乌鸦
乌有
乌云
乌贼

Wū guī
Wū hēi
Wū yā
Wū yǒu
Wū yún
Wū zéi

tortoise
jet black
crow
naught
dark clouds
cuttlefish

乌干达
乌拉圭
乌托邦
乌合之众
乌烟瘴气

Wū Gān Dá
Wū Lā Guī
Wū Tuō Bāng
Wū hé zhī zhòng
Wū yān zhàng qì

Uganda (Africa)
Uruguay (Latin America)
Utopia
disorderly band
foul atmosphere

Example:

乌龟是两栖动物。

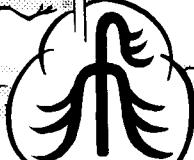
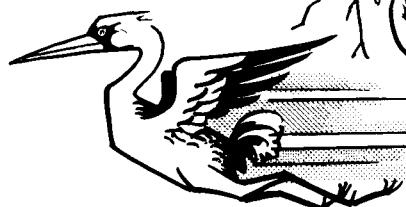
Wū guī shì liǎng qī dòng wù.

It means, "The tortoise is an amphibian."

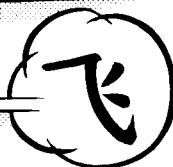
飞

(飛)

FĒI fly



This character draws its inspiration from the migratory flight of the crane - with the long neck of the bird folded on itself: 飛. The flight is speeded up by simplifying the regular form: 飛 , lightening its load of strokes from nine to three: 飞 .



PEN4

飞 飞 飞

飞机师 fēi jī shī pilot

飞禽走兽 fēi qín zǒu shòu birds and beasts

Example:

他要做个飞机师

Tā yào zuò gè fēi jī shī.

It means, "He wants to be a pilot."

羽

YÜ

feathers;
wings

Feathers - the showy plumage of birds - are represented by a pair of wings. Like human nature, feathers have changed little in character through the ages. From the original 羽 to 翼 and finally 羽, all look alike at a glance. To confirm this, our illustration takes a closer look at some birds of a feather.



𠂇 𠂇 羽 羽 羽 羽

| | | |
|------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 羽毛 | yǔ máo | feather |
| 羽毛球 | yǔ máo qiú | badminton |
| 羽毛球拍 | yǔ máo qiú pāi | badminton racket |
| 羽毛未丰 | yǔ máo wèi fēng | still young and immature |

Example:

我 喜 欢 打 羽 毛 球 。

Wǒ xǐ huān dǎ yǔ máo qiú.

It means, "I like to play badminton."

习

(習)

XÍ

practise

This ideograph combines wings (羽) with self (自, contraction of 自), suggesting a young bird learning to fly by itself; by extension, to practise: 习. Copying the bird, man also tries to fly by speeding up the simplification of the original intricate character: 翁, using only one wing for "practice": 习. Woe betide the bird that copies man!



| | | |
|----|---------|----------------------------|
| 习惯 | xí guàn | habit |
| 习气 | xí qì | bad habit |
| 习俗 | xí sú | custom; tradition |
| 习题 | xí tí | exercise (of school work) |
| 习性 | xí xìng | habits and characteristics |
| 习用 | xí yòng | use habitually |
| 习语 | xí yǔ | idiom |

| | | |
|-------|----------------------|---|
| 习作 | xí zuò | exercises in composition, drawing, etc. |
| 习以为常 | xí yǐ wéi cháng | be used (or accustomed) to |
| 习惯成自然 | xí guàn chéng zì rán | habit becomes second nature |
| 练习 | liànxí | practise; exercise |
| 学习 | xué xí | learning |

Example:

我们 应该 向伟人 学习。

Wǒ men yīng gāi xiàng wěi rén xué xí.

It means, "We should learn from great men."



SHÀN

fan



In this ideograph, a wing (羽) is likened to the leaf of a door (户) in that its attachment is at the end, and both are capable of vibrating and spreading out like a fan: 扇. The combination of these two related components enforces the idea of "fan" (扇), a useful and decorative device often made of feathers (羽).



PENG



扇动

shàn dòng fan; flap

扇惑

shàn huò incite; agitate

扇形

shàn xíng fan-shaped

扇子

shàn zi fan

一扇门

yí shàn mén a door

Example:

这扇子真美丽。

Zhè shàn zi zhēn měi lì.

It means, "This is a beautiful fan."

鱼

(魚)

YÚ fish

魚 魚 魚 魚



魚 is a pictograph of the fish, whose predatory habits prompt man to snap at his own fishy way of life: "Big fish eat small fish; small fish eat water insects; water insects eat weeds and mud." The tail of the fish: ⌂ proves to be its fiery end, being a form of fire (火), presumably kindled as man prepares to eat big fish.



PENG

鱼 鱼 鱼 鱼 鱼 鱼 鱼

鱼翅

yú chì

shark's fin (a delicacy)

鱼饵

yú ěr

fish-bait

鱼钩

yú gōu

fish-hook

鱼雷

yú léi

torpedo

鱼鳞

yú lín

fish-scales

鱼群

yú qún

shoal of fish

鱼网

yú wǎng

fishing net

鱼肝油

yú gān yóu

cod-liver oil

鱼米之乡

yú mǐ zhī xiāng

district where fish and rice are abundant

Example:

鱼翅是珍贵的食品。

Yú chì shì zhēn guì de shí pǐn.

It means, "Shark's fin is an expensive delicacy."

漁 (漁) 漁 漁

YÚ fishing

Fish (魚) and water (水) are requisites for fishing (漁). The ancient form for fishing reveals water teeming with fishes: 漁. The modified form sees the number reduced to one, probably due to success in fishing: 漁. Disclosed here is yet another form of fishing - without fish or water - but it doesn't look too successful.



2646

| | | | | | |
|----|---------|------------------|----|---------|-------------------|
| 渔村 | yú cūn | fishing-village | 渔利 | yú lì | reap unfair gains |
| 渔夫 | yú fū | fisherman | 渔民 | yú mǐn | fisherman |
| 渔港 | yú gǎng | fishing port | 渔业 | yú yè | fishery |
| 渔歌 | yú gē | fisherman's song | 渔船 | yú zhōu | fishing boat |

Example:

他 是 一 个 勤 劳 的 渔 夫 。

Tā shì yí gè qín láo de yú tú.

It means, "He is a hardworking fisherman."

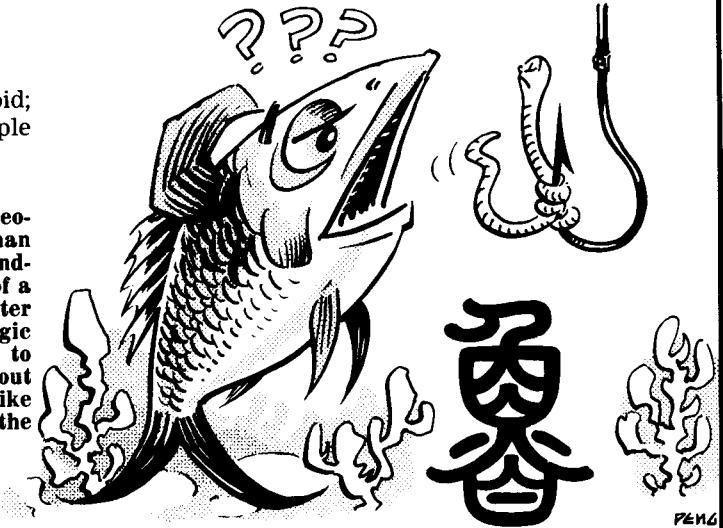
魯

(魯)

LÜ

stupid;
simple

In his eagerness to acquire an ideograph for simple or stupid, man literally acted the part. He appended to fish (魚) a representation of a nose (自) which was later corrupted to 口 (speak). The tragic result: a "dumb" fish unable to speak and a "nosey" one, without scent or sense: 魚. Simple man, like stupid fish, sees the bait, not the hook.



| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 鱼 | 魚 | 鲁 | 魯 | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

魯钝
魯莽

lǔ dùn
lǔ mǎng

stupid
reckless; careless

Example:

他 做 事 很 魯 莽 。

Tā zuò shì hěn lǔ mǎng .

It means, "He does his work carelessly."

羊

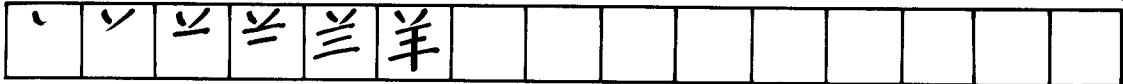
YÁNG

sheep;
goat



羊 羊

Because of its mild and gentle nature, the sheep (羊) is a fitting symbol for meekness. Its pictographic representations take on well-balanced forms. Early versions show frontal views of the head; later modifications fill in the horns, ears, legs and tail. When combined with other components, the tail is often left out: 兰.



| | | |
|-----|---------------|-----------------|
| 羊角 | yáng jiǎo | ram's horn |
| 羊毛 | yáng máo | sheep's wool |
| 羊排 | yáng pái | mutton chop |
| 羊皮 | yáng pí | sheep skin |
| 羊群 | yáng qún | flock of sheep |
| 羊肉 | yáng ròu | mutton |
| 羊毛衫 | yáng mǎo shān | knitted sweater |

| | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 羊肠小道 | yáng chāng xiǎo dào | winding path |
| 羊毛出在羊身上 | yáng máo chū zài yáng shēng shàng | in the long run, you pay for whatever you are given |
| 羔羊 | gāo yáng | lamb; kid |

Example:

他 不 吃 羊 肉 。

Tā bù chī yáng ròu.

It means, "He does not eat mutton."

鮮 (鮮)

This character combines two types of flesh: fish (魚) and sheep (羊). Although meat was usually preserved by salting, drying or smoking, ancient man preferred to eat the flesh of fish and sheep fresh. Hence, fish (魚) and sheep (羊) put together means "fresh": 鮮. In other words, "flesh" becomes "fresh".

XIĀN fresh



| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| / | 夕 | 夕 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 | 𠂇 |
| | | | 魚 | 魚 | 魚 | 魚 | 魚 | 魚 | 魚 | 魚 | 魚 | 鮮 |

| | | |
|----|-----------|------------------|
| 鮮果 | xiān guǒ | fresh fruit |
| 鲜红 | xiān hóng | bright red |
| 鲜花 | xiān huā | fresh flower |
| 鲜美 | xiān měi | delicious; tasty |
| 鲜明 | xiān míng | vividness |
| 鲜奶 | xiān nǎi | fresh milk |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 鲜血 | xiān xuè | blood |
| 鲜艳 | xiān yàn | colourful; bright-coloured |
| 鲜艳夺目 | xiān yàn duó mù | attractive to the eyes |
| 新鲜 | xīn xiān | fresh |

Example:

植物园里，花儿鲜艳夺目。

Zhí wù yuán lǐ, huā ér xiān yàn duó mù.

It means, "The flowers in the Botanic Gardens are very attractive."

羔

GĀO
lamb;
kid



A lamb (羔) is represented by a sheep (羊) ready to stand on its feet (...). As the four strokes (...) stand for fire, the lamb is also a sheep (羊) ready for roasting on the fire (...).

羔



PENG



羔皮
羔羊
羔子

gāo pí lamb skin
gāo yáng kid; lamb
gāo zi lamb; fawn

Example:

母羊不见了羔羊。

Mǔ yáng bù jiàn le gāo yáng.

It means, "The ewe has lost her lamb."

美

MÉI

beautiful;
admirable

This beautifully proportioned character is shaped from 羊 (sheep) and 大 (big). 大 originally represented a person grown big; 羊 is an animal admired for its peace-loving virtue. Ideographically, a mature person (大) who has the mild and gentle disposition of a sheep (羊) is regarded as beautiful, admirable: 美.



PANG

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 丶 | ノ | フ | 兰 | 羊 | 羊 | 善 | 美 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | |
|----|----------|-------------------|
| 美观 | měi guān | nice looking |
| 美国 | Měi Guó | America |
| 美好 | měi hǎo | fine; glorious |
| 美化 | měi huà | beautify |
| 美景 | měi jǐng | beautiful scenery |
| 美丽 | měi lì | beautiful |
| 美梦 | měi mèng | fond dream |
| 美妙 | měi miào | splendid |

| | | |
|-----|---------------|------------------|
| 美满 | měi mǎn | happy |
| 美术 | měi shù | fine arts |
| 美味 | měi wèi | delicious |
| 美元 | měi yuān | U.S. dollar |
| 美联社 | Měi Lián Shè | Associated Press |
| 美容院 | měi róng yuàn | beauty-parlour |
| 美术家 | měi shù jiā | artist |

Example:

她的脸型很美。

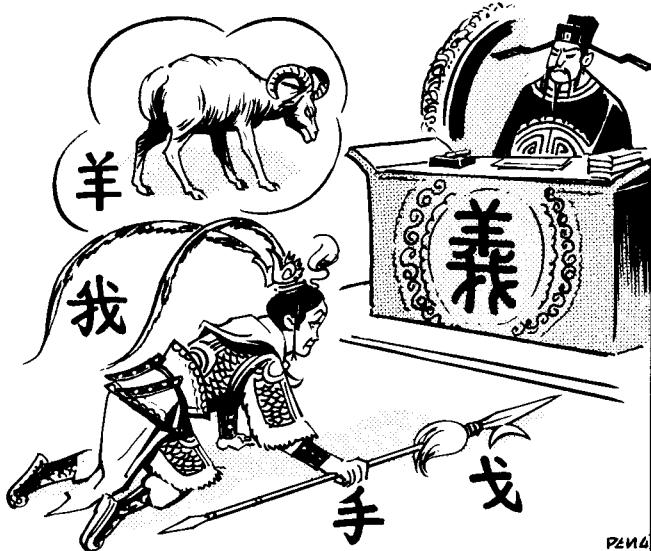
Tā de liǎn xíng hěn měi.

It means, "She has a pretty face."

义 (義)

Yì justice; righteousness

When justice (義) prevails, the aggressive "I": 我 (with spear 戈 in hand 手) becomes subdued like a docile and gentle sheep (羊). Hence 義 justifies itself as a symbol for right conduct. For the sake of righteousness the regular form is now slashed to three strokes, transforming it into a simplified and perfectly balanced justice: 义.



PEN4



| | | | | | |
|----|--------|----------------------------------|------|----------------|---------------------|
| 义愤 | yì fèn | indignation | 义演 | yì yǎn | benefit performance |
| 义气 | yì qì | code of brotherhood | 义不容辞 | yì bù róng cí | be duty-bound |
| 义士 | yì shì | high-minded or chivalrous person | 义务劳动 | yì wù láo dòng | voluntary labour |
| 义务 | yì wù | obligation; duty | 意义 | yì yì | meaning |
| | | | 正义 | zhèn yì | justice |

Example:

保 卫 国 家 是 人 民 的 义 务 。

Bǎo wèi guó jiā shì rén mǐn de yì wù.

It means, "It is the duty of the people to defend their own country."

洋

YÁNG

ocean;
foreign

Although 羊 is a phonetic, it also serves to emphasize the meaning of this character for ocean: 洋. Sheep, being inland animals, graze on land away from the ocean; so water (水) far away from the sheep (羊) came to mean ocean: 洋. By extension, 洋 also means "foreign", i.e., far away beyond the ocean.



PENG

、：シシジジ洋洋洋洋洋洋

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|-------------------------------|------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 洋葱 | yáng cōng | onion | 洋人 | yáng rén | foreigner |
| 洋服 | yáng fú | Western-style clothes | 洋溢 | yáng yì | fill with |
| 洋行 | yáng háng | foreign firm | 洋洋得意 | yáng yáng dé yì | be very pleased with oneself |
| 洋化 | yáng huà | westernized | 海洋 | hǎi yáng | ocean |
| 洋灰 | yáng huī | cement | 大西洋 | Dà Xī Yáng | Atlantic Ocean |
| 洋货 | yáng huò | imported goods; foreign goods | 太平洋 | Tài Píng Yáng | Pacific Ocean |

Example:

他的女朋友很洋化。

Tā de nǚ péng yǒu hěn yáng huà.

It means, "His girlfriend is very westernized."

羨 (羨)

This ideograph: 羨, expressive of intense desire, combines 羊 (sheep) with 次 (an old form of 涎, meaning saliva). 羨, therefore, signifies the mouth watering (涎) at the sight or smell of mutton, the flesh of sheep (羊). Hence, the extended meaning: to covet or desire.

XIĀN covet; desire



PENG



羨慕

xiān mù

admire; envy

Example:

他很羨慕我有这么一个好教师。

Tā hěn xiān mù wǒ yǒu zhè me yí gè hǎo jiào shī.

It means, "He envied me for having such a good teacher."



HUǒ
fire

火 is a pictograph of fire, produced by rubbing stones together. A terrifying force of nature, it brings both calamity and comfort to man. Like burning issues that often flare up in life, fire is easy to kindle, but difficult to handle, as the proverb warns: "You can't use paper to wrap up fire."



PENG



| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|--------------|----|----------|----------------------|
| 火柴 | huǒ chái | match | 火力 | huǒ lì | fire-power |
| 火车 | huǒ chē | train | 火炉 | huǒ lú | furnace |
| 火光 | huǒ guāng | flame; blaze | 火气 | huǒ qì | temper |
| 火海 | huǒ hǎi | sea of fire | 火山 | huǒ shān | volcano |
| 火花 | huǒ huā | sparks | 火星 | Huǒ Xīng | Mars |
| 火化 | huǒ huà | cremate | 火药 | huǒ yào | gun-powder |
| 火箭 | huǒ jiàn | rocket | 火灾 | huǒ zāi | fire (as a calamity) |
| 火警 | huǒ jǐng | fire alarm | | | |

Example:

火车上人山人海。

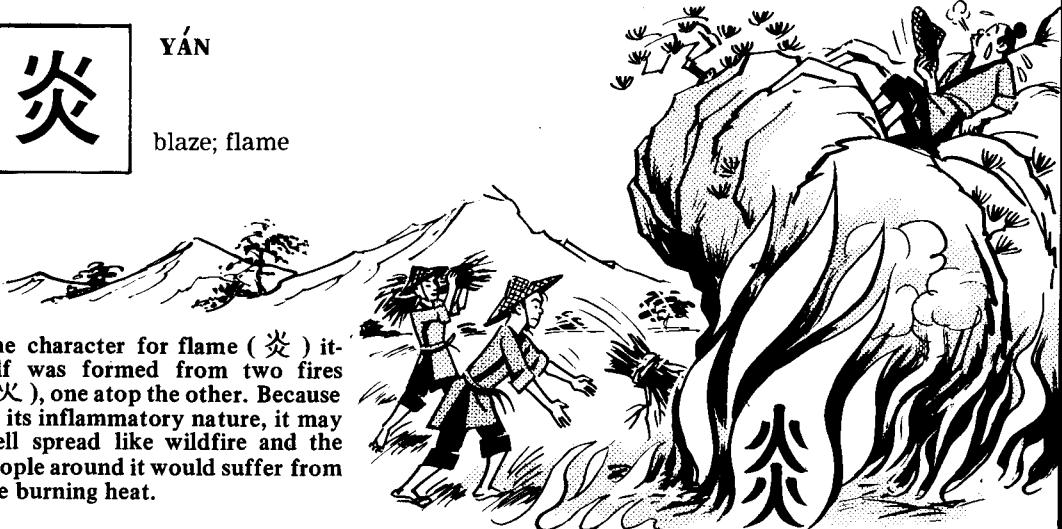
Huǒ chē shàng rén shān rén hǎi.

It means, "The train is crowded with people."

炎

YÁN

blaze; flame



PENG



| | | |
|----|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 炎凉 | yán liáng | cold-shoulder |
| 炎热 | yán rè | burning (or scorching) hot |
| 炎夏 | yán xià | hot summer |
| 炎炎 | yán yán | sweltering |
| 炎症 | yán zhèng | inflammation |

Example:

今天天气很炎热。

Jīn tiān tiān qì hěn yán rè.

It means, "The weather is scorching hot today."

谈 (談)

談, or words (言) beside flame (炎), aptly signifies an informal chat by the fire — idle talk in which much is spoken but little is said. Mischief arising from aimless opening of the mouth and thoughtless wagging of the tongue sparks the old saying: "Much talk brings on trouble; much food brings on indigestion."

TÁN

chat;
talk



PENG



谈到
谈话
谈论
谈判
谈天

tán dào
tán huà
tán lùn
tán pàn
tán tiān

speak of
talk; converse
discuss
negotiate
chit-chat

谈心
谈何容易
谈笑风生

tán xīn
tán hé róng yì
tán xiào fēng shēng

heart-to-heart talk
easier said than
done; by no
means easy
light-hearted and
interesting talk

Example:

我们 在 树 荫 下 谈 天。

Wǒ men zài shù yīn xià tán tiān.

It means, "We chit-chat under the shady tree."

灰 (灰)

HUĪ

ashes; dust; lime

Fire (火) in hand (扌) stands for ashes or dust: 灰 — the product of fire (火) that can be handled or taken in the hand (扌). 灰 also includes lime (obtained by burning limestone) which, though easily handled (扌), apparently contains fire (火), generating heat when mixed with water.



一 扌 扌 扌 火 灰

| | | |
|------|-----------------|--------------|
| 黑暗 | huī àn | dim; obscure |
| 灰尘 | huī chén | dust |
| 灰色 | huī sè | grey |
| 灰心 | huī xīn | disheartened |
| 灰心丧气 | huī xīn sàng qì | downhearted |

Example:

橱上有一层灰尘。

Chú shàng yǒu yì céng huī chén.

It means, "There is a layer of dust on top of the cupboard."

灾 (災)

Man, plagued by floods (水, stream) and fire (火), once regarded these unforeseen calamities as divine judgement: 灾. The modern simplified character for calamity: 灾, however, sets matters straight by locating fire (火) under roof (宀) — pinning the responsibility onto man himself.

ZĀI calamity



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| ' | 丶 | 宀 | 宍 | 宀 | 宍 | 灾 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | |
|----|-----------|-------------------------|
| 灾害 | zāi hài | calamity; disaster |
| 灾患 | zāi huàn | calamity |
| 灾荒 | zāi huāng | famine |
| 灾祸 | zāi huò | disaster |
| 灾情 | zāi qíng | condition of a disaster |
| 灾区 | zāi qū | disaster area |

| | | |
|----|----------|-----------------------------|
| 灾民 | zāi mǐn | victims of natural calamity |
| 灾难 | zāi nàn | misfortune |
| 灾殃 | zāi yāng | catastrophe |
| 天灾 | tiān zāi | natural disaster |
| 水灾 | shuǐ zāi | flood |

Example:

新加 坡 很 少 发 生 水 灾。

Xīn Jiā Pō hěn shǎo fā shēng shuǐ zāi.

It means, "Floods seldom occur in Singapore."

煽

SHĀN

incite; instigate; stir up

This ideograph literally implies fanning (扇) a fire (火). Figuratively, it means to excite or incite, to instigate or stir up: 煽。Our picture shows a firebrand demonstrating her own interpretation of the proverb: "Fuel alone will not ignite a fire."



PENG

煽动 煽乱 煽动者 煽风点火

| | | |
|------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 煽动 | shān dòng | instigate; incite |
| 煽乱 | shān luàn | stir up revolt |
| 煽动者 | shān dòng zhě | agitator |
| 煽风点火 | shān fēng diǎn huǒ | create trouble |

Example:

他 煽 动 旧 同 学 欺 侮 新 同 学 。

Tā shān dòng jiù tóng xué qī wǔ xīn tóng xué

It means, "He instigated his classmates to bully the new student."

燒

(燒)

SHĀO burn; bake; roast

火堯 probably originated from the firing (火) of earthenware (垚) stacked upon a support (元) in a kiln. The phonetic: 堯, showing earth (垚) piled up high on a pedestal (元) denotes high or great. Combination with the radical: 火 (fire) generates the character: 燒 which stands for the great heat required in baking, roasting or burning: 烧.



· · 少 火 火 炎 炎 炎 烧

| | | |
|----|------------|-------------------|
| 烧毁 | shāo huǐ | destroy by fire |
| 烧火 | shāo huǒ | make a fire |
| 烧焦 | shāo jiāo | scorch |
| 烧肉 | shāo ròu | roast meat |
| 烧伤 | shāo shāng | injury from burns |

| | | |
|----|------------|-------------------|
| 烧死 | shāo sǐ | be burnt to death |
| 烧香 | shāo xiāng | incense-offering |
| 烧窑 | shāo yáo | kiln |
| 发烧 | fā shāo | fever |

Example:

她常去寺庙烧香。

Tā cháng qù sì miào shāo xiāng.

It means, "She often goes to the temple to offer incense."

黑

HEI

black

The original seal form depicted a flame (爻) under a smoke vent or window (囗), blackening it (黑) with soot. Squaring the window: 囗 and modifying the flame: 炀, produced the modern character: 黑, meaning black.

炎 炀 黑 黑



一 口 口 口 口 口 里 里 黑 黑 黑 黑

| | | |
|----|---------|-----------------|
| 黑暗 | hei' àn | dark |
| 黑白 | hei bai | black and white |
| 黑板 | hei bǎn | blackboard |
| 黑人 | hei rén | Black people |
| 黑色 | hei sè | black |
| 黑市 | hei shì | black market |

| | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------------------|
| 黑心 | hei xīn | black-hearted; evil-minded |
| 黑夜 | hei yè | dark night |
| 黑名单 | hei míng dān | blacklist |
| 黑啤酒 | hei pí jiǔ | stout |
| 乌黑 | wū hei | jet black |

Example:

她 怕 黑 暗 。

Tā pà hei àn

It means, "She is afraid of the dark."

墨空

Mò

ink;
Chinese ink

Chinese ink: 墨 was first made by mixing smoke-soot (墨) with gum to produce an earthy (土) substance. The mixture was then moulded and hardened into a solid stick, ready to be ground with water to form live ink. Even though a little ink is better than a good memory, man apparently prefers to heed the proverb: "He who is near ink gets black," committing it to memory.



墨迹

墨水

墨硯

墨鱼

mò jī

mò shuǐ

mò yàn

mò yú

ink mark

ink

inkstone

inkfish; cuttlefish

墨汁

黑水筆

mò zhì

mò shuǐ bǐ

prepared Chinese
ink

fountain pen

Example:

我 喜 欢 用 墨 水 笔 写 字 。

Wǒ xǐ huān yòng mò shuǐ bǐ xiě zì.

It means, "I like to write with a fountain pen."

点

(點)

DIĀN point; spot; dot

The phonetic component: 占 means to divine, to ask about or interpret orally (口) the cracks (卜) of a heated tortoise shell — to point out the unknown. Adding the radical component: 黑 (black) emphasizes the point with black. Hence: 點, a black point, a spot or dot. The simplified version comes even more to the point: 点 by setting divination (占) on fire (...).



PENG



点菜

diǎn cài

choose dishes from
a menu

点滴

diǎn dī

droplet

点火

diǎn huǒ

light a fire

点名

diǎn míng

call the roll

点燃

diǎn rán

kindle

点头

diǎn tóu

nod one's head

点心

diǎn xīn

light refreshments

点缀

diǎn zhù

decorate

Example:

他 把 蜡 烛 点 燃 了 。

Tā bǎ là zhú diǎn rán le.

It means, "He lighted the candle."

草

CÀO

grass; weeds

草 is a pictograph of grass, commonly written: 草. The contracted form is 艹. Despised as weed that sways with the wind, the lowly grass (艸) nevertheless provides the root for a host of "plant" characters. And, unlike the grassroots of human society, it can draw comfort from the proverb: "Every blade of grass has its own share of dew."



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 十 | 廿 | 廿 | 芻 | 芚 | 苜 | 苜 | 草 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|

| | | |
|----|---------|------------------------------|
| 草包 | cǎo bāo | block-head; good-for-nothing |
| 草草 | cǎo cǎo | done rashly |
| 草稿 | cǎo gǎo | manuscript; draft |
| 草菇 | cǎo gū | straw mushroom |
| 草绿 | cǎo lǜ | grass green |
| 草帽 | cǎo mào | straw hat |

| | | |
|----|-----------|----------------|
| 草莓 | cǎo méi | strawberry |
| 草皮 | cǎo pí | turf; sod |
| 草率 | cǎo shuài | careless |
| 草席 | cǎo xí | straw mat |
| 草药 | cǎo yào | medicinal herb |
| 草原 | cǎo yuán | grasslands |

Example:

马儿爱吃草。

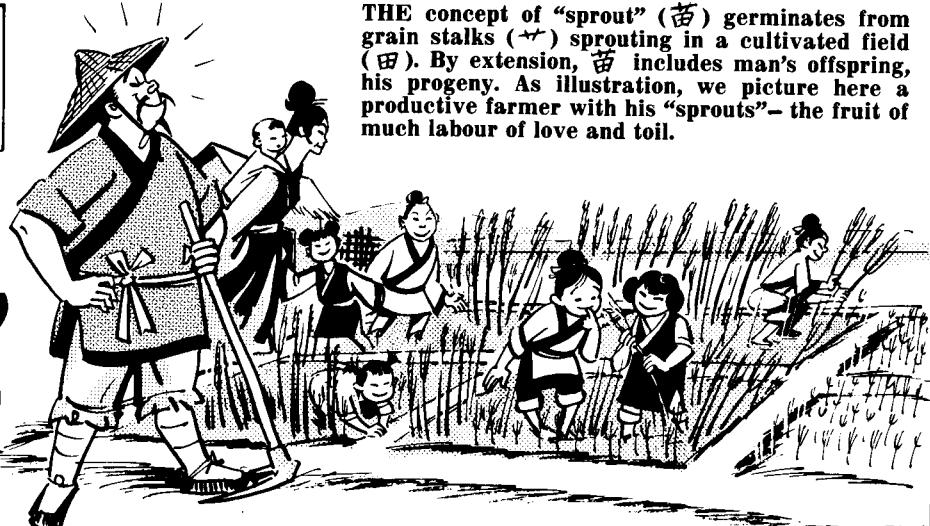
Mǎr éi chī cǎo.

It means, "Horses like to eat grass."

苗

MIÁO

sprouts;
shoots



PENG

一 十 十 十 苗 苗 苗 苗

苗条
苗族
树苗
幼苗

miáo tiáo slender and slim
miáo zú the Miao tribe
shù miáo sapling
yòu miáo seedling

Example:

那位小姐的身材很苗条。

Nà wèi xiǎo jiě de shēng cái hěn miáo tiáo.

It means, "That lady has a slender and slim figure."

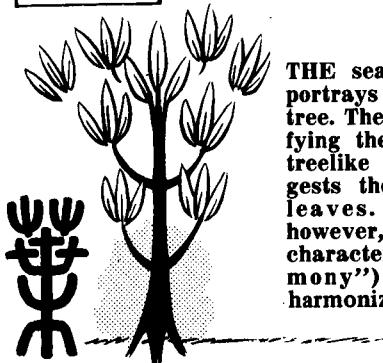
THE concept of "sprout" (苗) germinates from grain stalks (十) sprouting in a cultivated field (田). By extension, 苗 includes man's offspring. As illustration, we picture here a productive farmer with his "sprouts"— the fruit of much labour of love and toil.

47

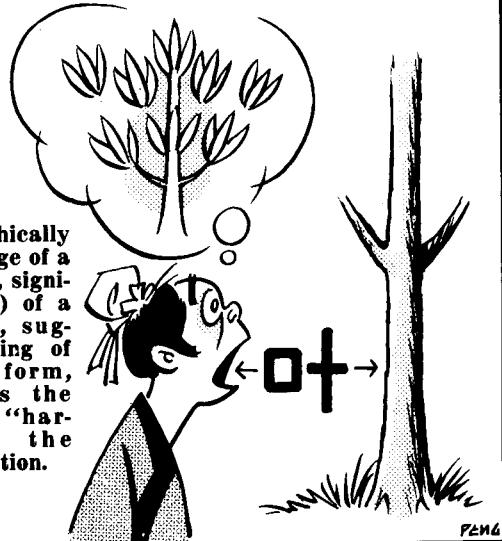
(葉)

YE

leaves



THE seal form:  graphically portrays the luxuriant foliage of a tree. The regular form: , signifying the generations (世) of a treelike (木) plant (犮), suggests the seasonal sprouting of leaves. The simplified form, however, simply borrows the character:  (originally "harmony") and leaves the harmonizing to the imagination.



РЕНТ

丨 ㄇ ㄻ ㄮ-ㄩ

| | | |
|------|----------------|---|
| 叶柄 | yè bǐng | leafstalk |
| 叶子 | yè zi | leaf |
| 叶落归根 | yè luò guī gēn | falling leaves settle on their roots—a person residing elsewhere finally returns to his ancestral home |
| 枫叶 | fèng yè | maple leaf |

Example:

这片叶子好大啊！

Zhè piàn yè zǐ hǎo dà à !

It means, "What a big leaf!"

花

HUĀ

flowers

ORIGINALLY, 化 pictured a man tumbling heels over head, indicating a complete change — a metamorphosis. With the plant radical (艹) grafted on, 花 assumed a different character and blossomed into a flower: 花 — that part of a plant (艸) which is strikingly transformed (化) or changed from the other parts.



PENG

一 十 卄 艹 花 花 花

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|--------------------|------|-----------------|---|
| 花瓣 | huā bàn | petal | 花生米 | huā shēng mǐ | shelled peanut |
| 花边 | huā biān | lace | 花花公子 | huā huā gōng zǐ | dandy; coxcomb; fop |
| 花草 | huā cǎo | flowers and plants | 花花绿绿 | huā huā lǜ lǜ | colourful |
| 花朵 | huā duǒ | flower | 花花世界 | huā huā shì jiè | the dazzling human world with its myriad temptations; this mortal world |
| 花篮 | huā lán | flower basket | | | |
| 花瓶 | huā píng | vase | | | |
| 花圈 | huā quān | wreath | | | |
| 花生 | huā shēng | peanut | | | |
| 花园 | huā yuán | garden | | | |

Example:

这朵花儿很美丽。

Zé duǒ huā ér hěn měi lì.

It means, "This flower is very beautiful."

茶

CHÁ

tea



THE tea herb, picked from a tree-like (木) plant (艸), is fermented and dried under cover (宀) before being brewed as tea: 茶. A beverage originally used as medicine, 茶 refreshes and soothes. Even when trouble brews, an amicable settlement can be effected over a cup of tea, as the proverb hints: "When you have tea and wine, you have many friends."



FENG

一 十 廿 艹 艾 苒 莼 茶 茶

| | | |
|----|----------|--------------|
| 茶杯 | chá bēi | teacup |
| 茶匙 | chá chí | teaspoon |
| 茶点 | chá diǎn | refreshments |
| 茶巾 | chá jīn | tea cloth |
| 茶具 | chá jù | tea-set |
| 茶壶 | chá hú | teapot |
| 茶会 | chá huì | tea-party |

| | | |
|----|----------|---------------------|
| 茶钱 | chá qian | tip |
| 茶水 | chá shuǐ | tea or boiled water |
| 茶叶 | chá yè | tea-leaves |
| 茶座 | chá zuò | tea-house |
| 茶园 | chá yuán | tea plantation |
| 喝茶 | hē chá | drink tea |

Example:

我 喜 欢 喝 茶 。

Wǒ xǐ huān hē chá.

It means, "I like to drink tea."

英

YĪNG

brave;
heroic

A mature man (大) in the midst of a large space (广), thick with vegetation (艸), suggests a brave man in a jungle. Hence: 英, meaning brave or heroic. Although there will always be a brave man to respond to a high reward, the ancient saying reveals the true source of courage: "Men of principle have courage."



一 十 二 三 节 苣 英

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 英镑 | yīng bàng | pound sterling | 英雄 | yīng xióng | hero |
| 英才 | yīng cái | person of outstanding ability | 英勇 | yīng yǒng | courageous |
| 英国 | Yīng Guó | England | 英语 | yīng yǔ | English (language) |
| 英豪 | yīng háo | hero | 英姿 | yīng zī | valiant and fine-looking |
| 英俊 | yīng jùn | handsome | 英国人 | yīng guó rén | Englishman |
| 英明 | yīng míng | brilliant | 英联邦 | yīng liáng bāng | British |
| 英名 | yīng míng | illustrious name | | | Commonwealth (of Nations) |
| 英文 | yīng wén | English (language) | | | |

Example:

岳飞是宋朝的一位英雄人物。

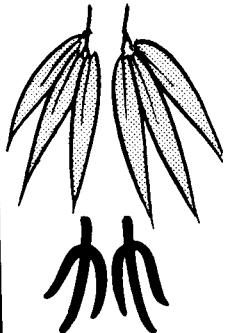
Yüè Fēi shì Sòng cháo de yí wèi yīng xióng rén wù.

It means, "Yue Fei was a heroic figure of the Song dynasty."

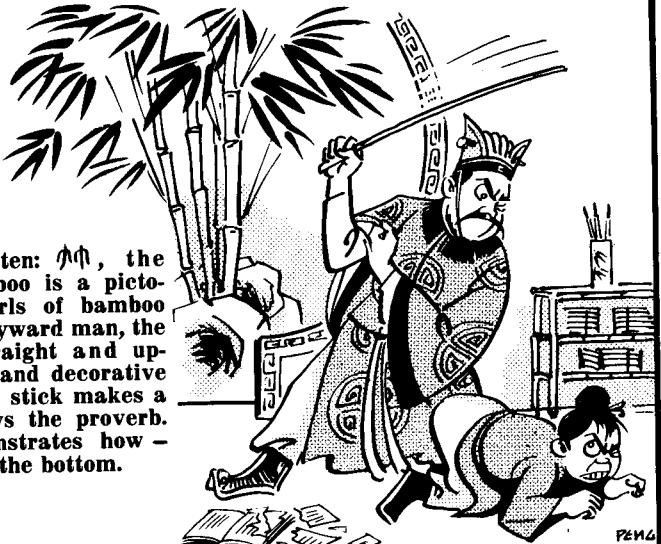
竹

ZHÚ

bamboo



ORIGINALLY written: 竹, the character for bamboo is a pictograph of two whorls of bamboo leaves. Unlike a wayward man, the bamboo grows straight and upright into a useful and decorative plant. "The bamboo stick makes a good child," so says the proverb. Our picture demonstrates how - starting right from the bottom.



竹 竹 竹 竹 竹

竹竿

zhú gān

bamboo pole

竹林

zhú lín

bamboo grove

竹荀

zhú sǔn

bamboo shoot

竹子

zhú zi

bamboo

竹叶青

zhú yè qīng

bamboo-leaf-green
liqueur

山竹

shān zhú

mangosteen

Example:

这 椅 子 是 竹 做 的 。

Zhè yǐ zì shì zhú zuò de.

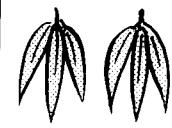
It means, "This chair is made of bamboo."

筆

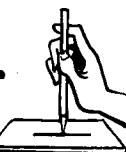
(筆)

A hand (手) holding a stylus (丨), scratching lines (一) on a tablet (一), symbolizes a writing stylus: 筆. Bamboo (竹) added to stylus (筆) produces "pen": 筆. Bamboo (竹) combined with hair (毛) also makes "pen": 筆. Although both the regular 筆 and simplified 筆 can be used to write "pen", the saying goes: "A pen cannot write two words at the same time."

BÌ pen; pencil

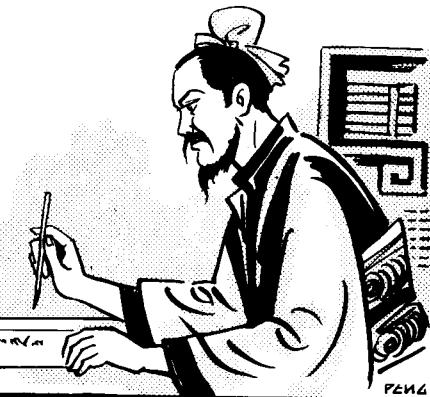
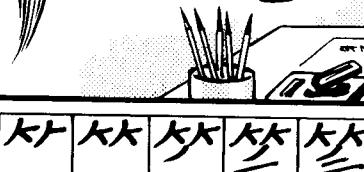


+



= 筆
= 筆

+



PENG

| | | | | | |
|----|---------|--------------------------------|----|---------|---------------------|
| 笔调 | bǐ diào | (of writing) tone | 笔名 | bǐ míng | pseudonym |
| 笔法 | bǐ fǎ | technique of writing | 笔墨 | bǐ mò | pen and ink |
| 笔画 | bǐ huà | strokes of a Chinese character | 笔试 | bǐ shì | written examination |
| 笔记 | bǐ jì | notes | 笔误 | bǐ wù | slip of the pen |
| 笔迹 | bǐ jì | writing | 笔战 | bǐ zhàn | written polemics |
| 笔尖 | bǐ jiān | pen nib | 钢笔 | gāng bì | fountain pen |
| | | | 铅笔 | qiān bì | pencil |

Example:

他的笔迹很美。

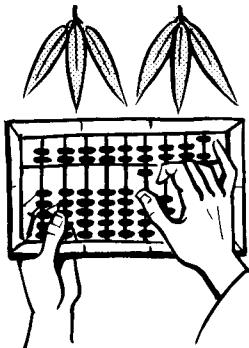
Tā de bì jì hěn měi.

It means, "He has beautiful handwriting."

算

SUÀN

calculate; plan



算, the character for calculate or plan, is cleverly conceived: two hands (丩) manipulating an abacus (目) made of bamboo (竹). Although 算 emphasizes doing with the hands, it also means to contrive, as exemplified by the character shown here who is planning more and doing less.



PENNA

算 算 算 算 算 算 算 算 算 算 算 算

算法
算命
算盘

suàn fǎ
suàn mìng
suàn pán

algorithm
fortune-telling
abacus

算术
计算

suàn shù
jì suàn

arithmetic
calculate

Example:

他的 算 术 是 班 上 最 好 的 。

Tā de suàn shù shì bān shàng zuì hǎo de.

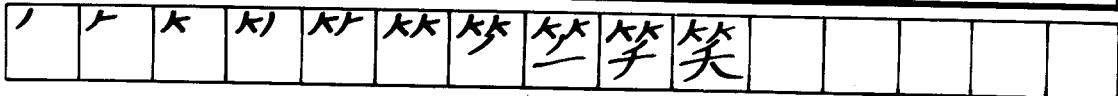
It means, "He tops the class in arithmetic."

孝

laugh; smile



PENG



| | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|--------------------|------|----------------------------|---|
| 笑柄 | xiao bing | laughing-stock | 笑嘻嘻 | xiào xī xī | grinning |
| 笑话 | xiao huà | joke | 笑里藏刀 | xiào lǐ cáng dāo | hide a dagger in a smile; (figuratively) with murderous intent behind one's smile |
| 笑剧 | xiao jù | farce | | | |
| 笑脸 | xiao liǎn | smiling face | 笑脸常开 | xiào liǎn cháng kāi | put on a smiling face always |
| 笑料 | xiao liào | laughing-stock | 笑逐颜开 | xiào zhú yán kāi | beam with smiles |
| 笑骂 | xiao mà | deride and taunt | | | |
| 笑容 | xiao róng | smiling expression | | | |
| 笑哈哈 | xiao hā hā | laughingly | | | |
| 笑面虎 | xiao miàn hǔ | smiling tiger | | | |

Example:

他喜欢讲笑话。

Tā xǐ huān jiǎng xiào huà

It means, "He likes to joke."

禾

HÉ

grain

禾, the radical for "grain", is a tree (木) with the top bent over to represent the head of a ripened grain. The grain-stalk provides, not only food for the body, but also food for thought: the more grain it bears in the head, the more it bends in humility.

禾
禾
禾



PENG

禾 叉 禾 苗

禾叉
禾虫
禾苗

hé chā
hé chóng
hé miáo

pitchfork
harvest grub
grain seedling

禾黍
禾穗

hé shǔ
hé suì

millet
a ear (of rice grain)

Example:

禾苗已经长大了。

Hé miáo yǐ jīng zhǎng dà le.

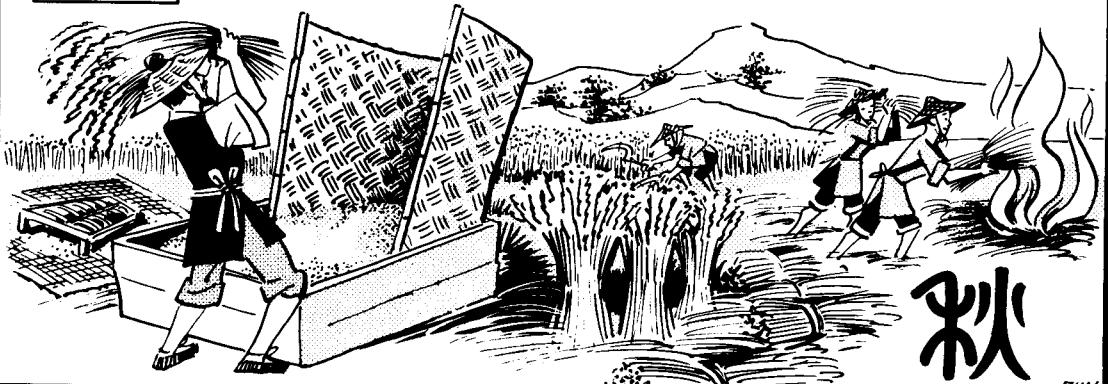
It means, "The grain seedlings have fully grown."

秋

QIŪ

autumn

During the autumn harvest, the grain (禾) ripens under the fiery heat (火) of the sun. Hence: 秋, meaning "autumn". In China, one can see the waste stalks of grain (禾) disposed of by fire (火) after the harvesting and threshing in Autumn.



秋 波 千 手 禾 禾 和 秋 秋

秋波

qiū bō

bright eyes of a
beautiful woman

秋季

qiū jì

autumn season

秋千

qiū qiān

swing

秋色

qiū sè

autumn scenery

秋收

qiū shōu

autumn harvest

秋水

qiū shuǐ

autumn waters

秋天

qiū tiān

autumn

秋种

qiū zhòng

autumn sowing

春秋时代

Chūn Qiū Shí Dài

The Spring and

Autumn period

(B. C. 722-481)

in Chinese history

Example:

秋天的景色很美。

Qiū tiān de jǐng sè hěn měi.

It means, "The scenery in autumn is beautiful."

愁

CHÓU

sad; melancholy

As the year declines, with each falling leaf signalling autumn (秋), man's heart (心) becomes weighed down with a nostalgic melancholy: 愁. He realizes nature cannot jump from winter to summer without a spring or from summer to winter without a fall. Hence: 愁 — the influence of autumn (秋) on the heart ('心').



PENG

愁 悲 悲 悲 悲 悲 悲 悲 悲 悲 悲 悲

愁肠

chóu chāng

pent-up feelings of
sadness

愁苦

chóu kǔ

anxiety; distress

愁眉

chóu méi

knitted brows

愁闷

chóu mèn

feel gloomy

愁容

chóu róng

sorrowful
countenance

愁绪

chóu xù

gloomy mood

愁眉苦脸

chóu méi kǔ liǎn

distressed look

Example:

她的 脸 充 满 愁 容 。

Tā de liǎn chōng mǎn chóu róng.

It means, "She looks sorrowful."

税

SHUÌ

tax

To justify taxation, man coined 稅 from 禾 (grain) and 兑 (exchange). Evidently farmers paid their taxes in grain (禾) in "exchange" (兑) for services and privileges. The proverb, however, has the last word: "Those who are prospering do not argue about taxes." They just close their eyes, shut their mouths and pay through the nose.



PENG

税 税 税 税 税 税 税 税

| | | |
|----|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 税额 | shuì é | amount of tax to be paid |
| 税款 | shuì kuǎn | tax payment; taxa- tion |
| 税率 | shuì lǜ | tax rate |

| | | |
|-----|--------------|---------------|
| 税收 | shuì shōu | tax revenue |
| 税制 | shuì zhì | tax system |
| 税务局 | shuì wù jú | tax bureau |
| 税务员 | shuì wù yuān | tax collector |

Example:

我 已 经 付 了 所 得 税 。

Wǒ yǐ jīng fù le suǒ dé shuì.

It means, "I have paid my income tax."

秃

TU bald; bare

This ideograph likens the top or head of man (亼) to a field of grain (禾) after the harvest. Hence: 秃, meaning bare or bald. We show here man in the autumn of his life — after his very last harvest.



PEN4

秃

秃笔

TU bǐ

bald writing brush—
(figuratively) poor
writing ability

秃顶

TU dǐng

bald

秃山

TU shān

barren hill

秃头

TU tóu

bald head

秃子

TU zi

baldhead

光秃秃

guāng TU tū

bare; bald

Example:

他的头光秃秃。

Tā de tóu guāng tū tū

It means, "His head is bald."

苏 (蘇)

SŪ

revive



The original character: 鮒 suggests reviving by means of a wholesome meal of fish (魚) and grain (禾). This was reclarified with the radical for grass (艹) — the weed that revives easily: 蘘. The simplified form completes the revival with an injection of “strength” (力), equally balanced on both sides: 苏.

PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 十 | 廿 | 芳 | 芳 | 苏 | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

苏打
苏丹

sū dá
Sū Dān

soda
Sultan; Sudan (in Africa)
Soviet Union
rest

苏联
苏息

Sū Lián
sū xí

苏醒
苏州
苏格兰

sū xǐng
Sū Zhōu
Sū Gé Lán

revive; regain consciousness
Suzhou (Soo-chow), China
Scotland

Example:

她苏醒了。

Tā sū xǐng guò lái le.

It means, “She has regained consciousness.”

和

HÉ

harmony; and

和



Grain (禾), being man's staple food, is most agreeable to the mouth (口). Hence, grain (禾) agrees with mouth (口) to produce harmony: 和. Also agreeable is the proverbial saying: "If a family lives in harmony, all affairs will prosper."



P214

和 蔼 和 风 和 服 和 缓 和 会 和 解 和 局 和 暖 和 平

| | | |
|----|---------|-------------------|
| 和蔼 | hé ǎi | amiable |
| 和风 | hé fēng | gentle breeze |
| 和服 | hé tú | kimono |
| 和缓 | hé huǎn | gentle; mild |
| 和会 | hé huì | peace conference |
| 和解 | hé jiě | become reconciled |
| 和局 | hé jú | drawn game; tie |
| 和暖 | hé nuǎn | pleasantly warm |
| 和平 | hé píng | peace |

| | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 和气 | hé qì | friendly |
| 和尚 | hé shàng | Buddhist monk |
| 和约 | hé yuē | peace treaty |
| 和平共处 | hé píng gòng chǔ | peaceful co-existence |
| 和颜悦色 | hé yán yuè sè | benign countenance or amiable manner |
| 和睦相处 | hé mù xiāng chǔ | live harmoniously |

Example:

同学 们 和 睦 相 处 !

Tóng xué men hé mù xiāng chǔ.

It means, "The students live harmoniously."

年

NIÁN
year



The original pictograph: 人 showed a man bearing a sheaf of grains — the job of the year.

"Flowers bloom year by year with the same beauty, but man changes from year to year." Man's fickleness is evident in his quest for a suitable character for "year".



This was replaced by an ideograph: 年, combining 千 (thousand) and 禾 (grain), i.e., the thousand stalks — the harvest of a year.



Then came 年, based on the radical: 扌 (shield), followed by the contraction: 年. Figuring these out would be quite a task — the work of a year.

PENG

1 1 1 1 1 年

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|--|----|------------|---------------------------|
| 年报 | nián bào | annual report | 年关 | nián guān | end of a year |
| 年初 | nián chū | beginning of a year | 年龄 | nián líng | age |
| 年代 | nián dài | age; years; era | 年迈 | nián mài | aged |
| 年底 | nián dǐ | end of a year | 年年 | nián nián | every year |
| 年度 | nián dù | year | 年轻 | nián qīng | young |
| 年份 | nián fèn | particular year | 年夜 | nián yè | eve of the lunar New Year |
| 年糕 | nián gāo | New Year cake made of glutinous rice flour | 成年 | chéng nián | adult; all year round |
| | | | 新年 | xīn nián | New Year |

Example:

我很喜欢吃年糕。

Wǒ hěn xǐ huān chī nián gāo.

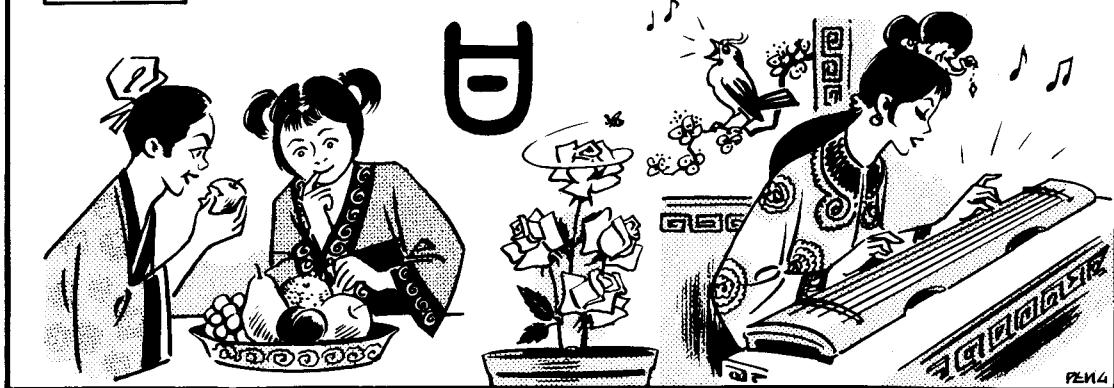
It means, "I like to eat New Year cake."



GĀN

sweet

"Sweetness" is handled with taste in the proverb: "All food tastes sweet to those who are hungry." The radical for "sweet" pictures the mouth (口) with something (-) in it worth holding — something sweet: 廿. 廿 can be extended to include anything pleasing to the senses, as illustrated here.



一十廿廿廿

| | | | | | |
|----|---------|-------------------------|------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| 甘草 | gān cǎo | licorice root | 甘愿 | gān yuàn | readily |
| 甘苦 | gān kǔ | weal and woe | 甘蔗 | gān zhe | sugarcane |
| 甘露 | gān lù | sweet dew | 甘心情愿 | gān xīn qíng | willingly and gladly |
| 甘美 | gān měi | sweet and refreshing | 苦尽甘来 | kǔ jìn gān lái | after suffering comes happiness |
| 甘心 | gān xīn | willingly; readily | | | |

Example:

我 喜 欢 喝 甘 蔗 汁。

Wǒ xǐ huān hé gān zhè zhī.

It means, "I like to drink sugarcane juice."

香

XIĀNG

fragrant



香 香 香

The seal form of this radical for fragrance represents the sweet (甘) odour of millet (黍) undergoing fermentation: 香. Grain (禾), the essence of millet grain (黍), was distilled for the modified version: 香, leading to the modern form: 香.



PENG



香肠
香菜
香粉
香菇
香花
香蕉
香料

xiāng cháng
xiāng cài
xiāng fěn
xiāng gū
xiāng huā
xiāng jiāo
xiāng liào

sausage
coriander
face powder
mushroom
fragrant flower
banana
spice

香气
香水
香味
香烟
香皂
香槟酒
香喷喷

xiāng qì
xiāng shuǐ
xiāng wèi
xiāng yān
xiāng zào
xiāng bīn jiǔ
xiāng pēn pēn

aroma
perfume
sweet smell
cigarette
soap
champagne
sweet-smelling

Example:

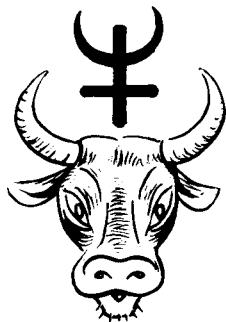
这朵花好香啊 !
Zhè duǒ huā hǎo xiāng a !

It means, "What a sweet-scented flower!"

牛

NIU

ox; cow; bull



THE seal form of this character is a pictograph of the ox, characterized by two prominent horns: 牛. Man's slave for life, the cow or ox has been exploited to the bone for labour, meat, milk, leather, glue, manure, etc. Even the modern form: 牛 does not spare the poor animal its horn.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| ノ | 人 | 二 | 牛 | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | |
|----|----------|----------------------------------|
| 牛痘 | niú dòu | cowpox |
| 牛角 | niú jiǎo | ox-horn |
| 牛劲 | niú jìn | great strength |
| 牛马 | niú mǎ | oxen and horses—beasts of burden |
| 牛奶 | niú nǎi | milk |
| 牛排 | niú pái | beef steak |

| | | |
|-----|------------|-------------------------|
| 牛棚 | niú péng | cowshed |
| 牛脾气 | niú pí qì | stubbornness; obstinacy |
| 牛肉 | niú ròu | beef |
| 牛尾 | niú wěi | oxtail |
| 牛仔裤 | niú zǎi kù | jeans |

Example:

多 喝 牛 奶 对 身 体 有 益 。

Duō hē niú nǎi duì shēn tǐ yǒu yì.

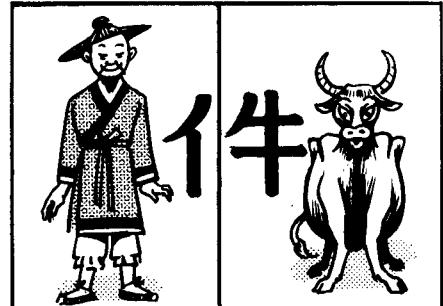
It means, "Milk is good for the health."

件

JIÀN

piece;
article;
item

LAMENTING the injustice of class distinction, man drew a parallel from animal life: "The ox ploughs the field and the horse eats the grain." When it came to picking a classifier for things in general, he favoured representatives of the two nobler classes: man himself (人) and his selfless ox (牛) and came up with 件: a classifier for anything from man (人) to beast (牛).



人 人 牛 人 仁 件

案件
密件

àn jiàn
mì jiàn

legal case
confidential
document

事件

shì jiàn

matter; event;
affair

文件
一件行李

wén jiàn
yī jiàn xíng lǐ

document
piece of luggage

Example:

他的抽屉里有很多机密文件。

Tā de chōu tì lǐ yǒu hěn duō jī mì wén jiàn.

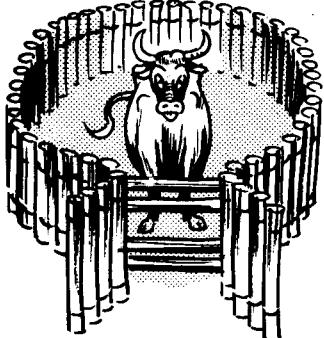
It means, "There are many confidential documents in his drawer."

牢

LÁO

cattle pen;
prison

牢



THE seal form: 牜 pictures a paddock (匚) confining an ox (牛) after the day's hard labour. The modern form: 牢 mercifully puts a roof (宀) over the beast (牛). By extension, 牢 represents a prison for the incarceration of "beasts" of human society who are also in for "hard labour".



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ' | 丶 | ノ | 匚 | 宀 | 宍 | 宍 | 宍 | 宍 | 宍 | 宍 | 宍 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

牢固
牢记
牢牢
牢骚

láo gù
láo jì
láo láo
láo sāo

firm; secure
remember well
firmly; safely
grumbling;
complaint

牢狱; 监牢
牢不可破
坐牢

láo yù; jiān láo
láo bù kě pò
zuò láo

prison; jail
unbreakable
be in prison

Example:

他因犯罪而被判坐牢。

Tā yīn fàn zuì ér bèi pàn zuò láo.

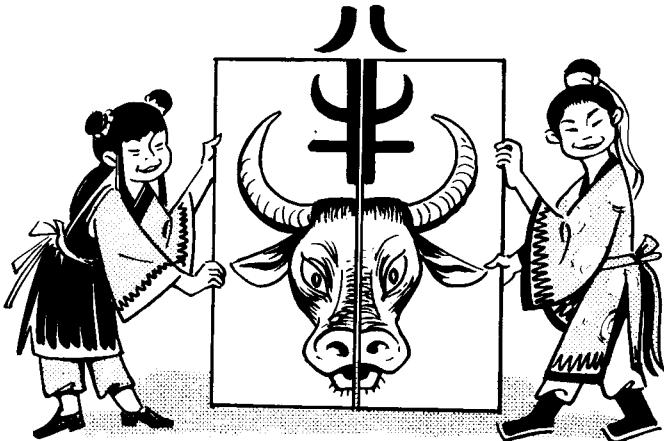
It means, "He was sentenced to jail."

半

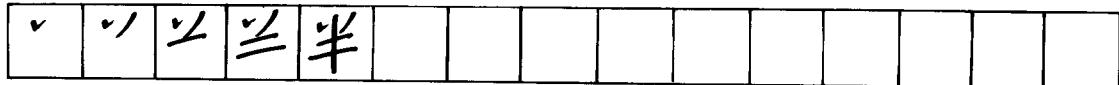
BÀN

half

THIS character originated from the butcher's practice of dividing (牛) an ox (牛) into two halves, in all its length, before cutting up. 牛 was modified to 半 to facilitate exact division. Hence: 半, meaning "half". Even though it is easy to split one ox into two halves, the saying proves true: "You cannot get two skins from one ox."



PENG



| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|-------------------------|------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| 半边 | bàn biān | one side (of something) | 半途 | bàn tú | half way |
| 半岛 | bàn dǎo | peninsula | 半夜 | bàn yè | midnight |
| 半价 | bàn jià | half-price | 半官方 | bàn guān fāng | semi-official |
| 半票 | bàn piào | half-price ticket | 半决赛 | bàn jué sài | semi-finals |
| 半生 | bàn shēng | half a lifetime | 半斤八两 | bàn jīn bā liǎng | not much to choose between the two |
| 半数 | bàn shù | half the number | 半途而废 | bàn tú ér fèi | give up halfway |
| 半天 | bàn tiān | half of the day | | | |

Example:

他 做 事 总 是 半 途 而 废。

Tā zuò shì zǒng shì bàn tú ér fèi.

It means, "He always gives up his work halfway."

伴

BÀN

companion;
associate;
mate

THE ideograph: 伴 is made up of man (亼) and half (半), suggesting that the single man is but half of a pair. To attain “oneness” another half, a complement, is needed. Hence 伴, meaning companion, associate or mate. In the choice of a better half, let man take heed: “Tiger and deer do not walk together.”



PENG

亼 亻 亻 亼 亼 亼 伴

伴唱

bàn chàng

vocal accompaniment

伴侣

bàn lǚ

companion;
partner

伴娘

bàn niáng

bridesmaid; maid-of-honour

伴随

bàn suí

accompany; follow

伴奏

bàn zòu

accompany with
musical instru-
ments

做伴

zuō bàn

keep somebody
company

Example:

她 唱 歌 时 需 要 有 人 伴 奏 。

Tā chàng gē shí xū yào yǒu rén bàn zòu .

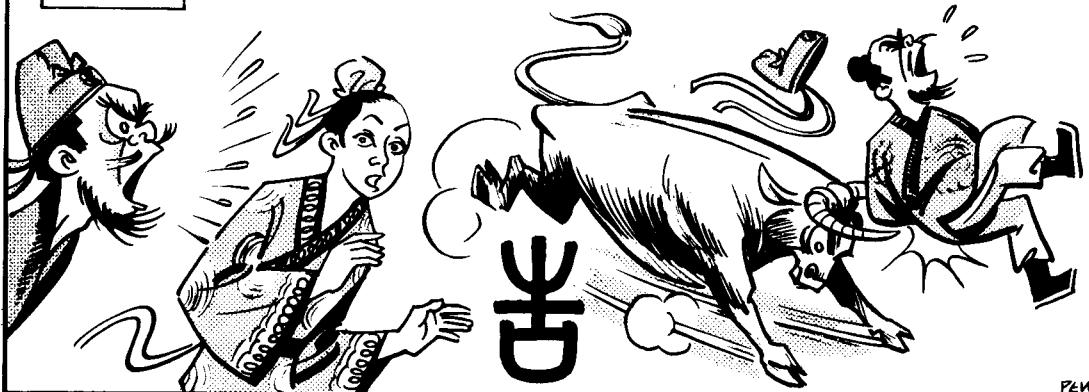
It means, “Whenever she sings, she needs instrumental accompaniment.”

告

GÀO

indict;
tell;
inform

ORIGINALLY 告 means to indict or accuse, i.e., do with the mouth (口) what the ox (牛) does with the horns: to gore. By extension it also means to tell, inform or even to warn. So, before starting to gore like an ox, be warned: "Man knows not his own fault; the ox knows not its strength."



PENG

丨 亼 仁 牛 牛 告 告

| | | |
|------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 告别 | gào bié | bid farewell to |
| 告吹 | gào chuī | fizzle out; fail |
| 告辞 | gào cí | take leave (of one's host) |
| 告发 | gào fā | report an offence |
| 告假 | gào jiǎ | ask for leave |
| 告示 | gào shì | official notice |
| 告诉 | gào sù | tell |
| 自告奋勇 | zì gào fèn yǒng | volunteer to do something |

| | | |
|------|---------------|--|
| 告退 | gào tuì | ask for leave to withdraw from a meeting |
| 告知 | gào zhī | inform |
| 告状 | gào zhuàng | lodge complaint; bring a suit against |
| 警告 | jǐng gào | warning |
| 不告而别 | bù gào ér bié | leaving without saying goodbye |

Example:

请 你 告 诉 我 怎 样 去 植 物 园 ?

Qǐng nǐ gào sù wǒ zěn yàng qù Zhí Wù Yuán?

It means, "Will you please tell me the way to the Botanic Gardens?"

牧

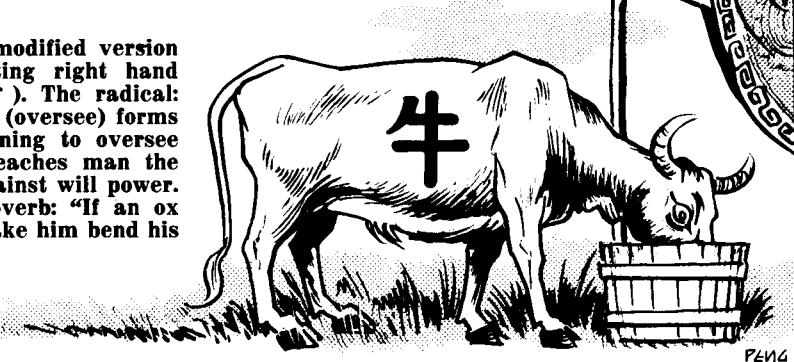
MÙ

tend cattle

THE phonetic: 爂 is a modified version of 支 (oversee), depicting right hand (又) wielding a rod (乚). The radical 牛 (cattle) added to 炂 (oversee) forms the ideograph: 牧, meaning to oversee cattle. Such oversight teaches man the futility of brute force against will power. In the words of the proverb: "If an ox won't drink, you can't make him bend his head."

牧

支



犮 牛 牛 牛 牛 牛 牧

| | | |
|----|----------|---------------|
| 牧草 | mù cǎo | forage grass |
| 牧场 | mù chǎng | grazing land |
| 牧放 | mù fàng | tend; herd |
| 牧歌 | mù gē | pastoral song |
| 牧民 | mù mǐn | herdsman |
| 牧区 | mù qū | pastoral area |

| | | |
|------|------------------|-------------------|
| 牧师 | mù shī | pastor; clergyman |
| 牧童 | mù tóng | shepherd boy |
| 牧业 | mù yè | animal husbandry |
| 牧羊人 | mù yáng rén | shepherd |
| 游牧生活 | yóu mù shēng huó | nomadic life |

Example:

牧童在草原上牧羊。

Mù tóng zài cǎo yuán shàng mù yáng.

It means, "The shepherd boy is tending sheep on the plain."

肉

RÒU

flesh; meat

THE character for meat: 肉 is composed of pieces of dried meat (乚) wrapped in a bundle (匚). From the ancient custom of offering such dried meat to the teacher came the term: "dried-meat money" - a teacher's pay.



PENG

| 一 匚 内 内 肉 肉

| | | |
|----|----------|---------------------------|
| 肉饼 | ròu bǐng | meat pie |
| 肉搏 | ròu bó | fight hand-to-hand |
| 肉店 | ròu diàn | butcher's (shop) |
| 肉干 | ròu gān | barbequed meat |
| 肉麻 | ròu má | nauseating; disgusting |
| 肉排 | ròu pái | steak |
| 肉片 | ròu piàn | sliced meat |

| | | |
|----|----------|---------------------|
| 肉体 | ròu tǐ | human body |
| 肉丸 | ròu wán | meatball |
| 肉刑 | ròu xíng | corporal punishment |
| 牛肉 | niú ròu | beef |
| 羊肉 | yáng ròu | mutton |
| 猪肉 | zhū ròu | pork |

Example:

马来人不吃猪肉。

Mǎ lái rén bù chī zhū ròu.

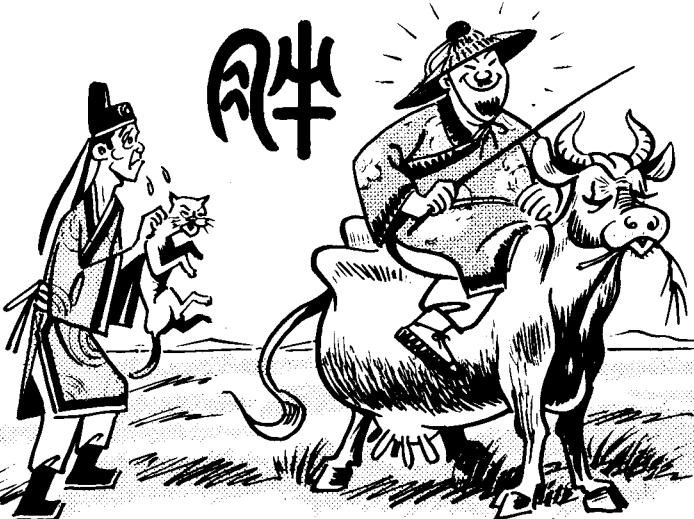
It means, "The Malays do not eat pork."

胖

PANG

fat; fleshy

THE original idea of 半 is "half a bull", denoting size. The radical: 肂 (flesh) supplements the thought, indicating fleshiness. Hence 胖: fleshy or fat. Beefiness and other bovine characteristics are not altogether undesirable according to the proverb: "You win a cat and lose a cow."



PANG

月 月 月 月 育 胖 胖 胖

胖子
发胖

pàng zi
fā pàng

fat person
put on weight

Example:

他 胖 起 来 了 。

Tā pàng qǐ lái le.

It means, "He is putting on weight."

有

YOU



EARLY forms portrayed a hand (手) grasping a piece of meat (肉), signifying to possess or to have: 手肉. Because of the resemblance between meat (肉) and moon (月), man soon lost sight of meat and reached for the moon, promising it to anyone he wishes to possess. Today, with hand (手) on moon (月), he classified 有 under "moon".



PENG

一十才布有有

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|---------------------------------------|------|-----------------|---|
| 有功 | yǒu gōng | have rendered great service | 有力 | yǒu lì | strong; powerful |
| 有关 | yǒu guān | related to; have something to do with | 有效 | yǒu xiào | efficacious; valid |
| 有害 | yǒu害 | harmful; detrimental | 有机可乘 | yǒu jī kě chéng | there's an opportunity to take advantage of |
| 有理 | yǒu lǐ | reasonable | 有利可图 | yǒu lì kě tú | stand to gain |
| 有利 | yǒu lì | advantageous; favourable | 有目共睹 | yǒu mù gòng dù | be there for all to see |
| | | | 有求必应 | yǒu qiú bì yìng | respond to every plea |

Example:

我 没 有 汽 车 。

Wǒ méi yǒu gì chē.

It means, "I don't have a car."

来 (來) LÁI

come

"HE who sows his grain in the field puts his trust in heaven," so observed the proverb. A bountiful yield of grain was therefore gratefully acknowledged as having "come" from above. Thus 来, originally a pictograph of growing wheat or barley, came to stand for "come". The simplified form grafts rice (米) on to tree (木) to produce 来 - a character no less welcome.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| 一 | 二 | 三 | 四 | 五 | 六 | 来 | 来 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|-------------------------------------|------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 来宾 | lái bīn | guest | 来年 | lái nián | next year |
| 来到 | lái dào | arrive; come | 来生 | lái shēng | next life |
| 来电 | lái diàn | incoming telegram | 来往 | lái wǎng | come and go |
| 来访 | lái tǎng | come to visit | 来信 | lái xìn | incoming letters |
| 来回 | lái huí | make a round trip | 来源 | lái yuán | source; origin |
| 来件 | lái jiàn | communication or parcel received | 来自 | lái zì | come from |
| 来客 | lái kè | guest | 来日方长 | lái rì fāng cháng | there is ample time ahead |
| 来临 | lái lín | approach; come | 出来 | chū lái | come out |

Example:

这些水果是来自澳洲的。

Zhè xiē shuǐ guǒ shì lái zì Ào Zhōu de.

It means, "These fruits are from Australia."

本

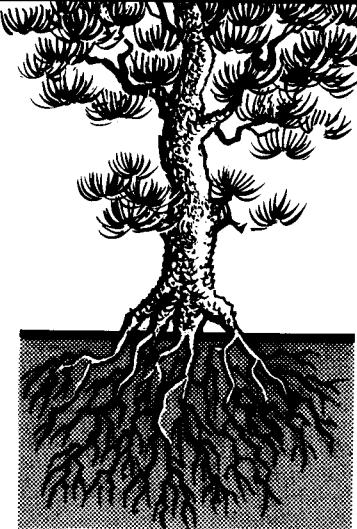
BĚN

root;
origin;
source



木 本

本 is a pictograph of a tree (木) with the root and stump emphasized by a horizontal stroke, indicating the level of the earth (—). Although the root is the lowest part of the tree, it is of the highest value in its struggle for survival. With good reason, also, 本 is used as a classifier for books, the "root" of knowledge.



PENG

一 十 才 木 本

| | | | | | |
|--------|-------------------|----------------------|----|----------|------------------------------------|
| 本地 | běn dì | this locality | 本人 | běn rén | I (me; myself) |
| 本分 | běn fèn | one's duty | 本身 | běn shēn | itself; in itself |
| 本国 | běn quó | one's own country | 本文 | běn wén | this text |
| 本行 | běn háng | one's own profession | 本性 | běn xìng | natural instincts |
| 本来; 原本 | běn lái; yuán běn | originally | 本意 | běn yì | original intention |
| 本领 | běn lǐng | skill; ability | 本质 | běn zhì | original meaning |
| 本能 | běn néng | instinct | 本子 | běn zǐ | innate character book; notebook |

Example:

这 件 事 情 根 本 和 我 无 关 。

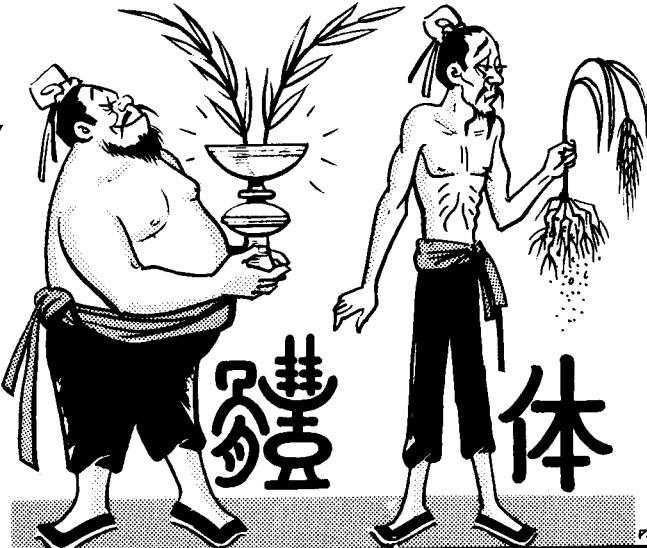
Zhè jiàn shì qíng gēn běn hé wǒ wú guān .

It means, "This matter has nothing to do with me at all."

体 (體) Tǐ

the body

THE regular form: 脊豈 combines 骨 (bone) with 豈 (plenty). The radical: 骨 itself is made up of skeleton (骨) and flesh (月). The other component: 豈 is a precious vessel symbolizing plenty. Hence: 脊豈, meaning "body" from skeleton, flesh and plenty. The simplified form gets to the root (本) of man (人), reducing him to a skeleton character: 体.



1 1 仁 什 什 休 体

| | | |
|----|---------|------------------------------|
| 体裁 | tǐ cái | types or forms of literature |
| 体操 | tǐ cāo | gymnastics |
| 体罚 | tǐ fá | physical punishment |
| 体格 | tǐ gé | physique; body |
| 体会 | tǐ huì | realise |
| 体力 | tǐ lì | physical (bodily) strength |
| 体面 | tǐ miàn | dignity; face |

| | | |
|----|----------|------------------------|
| 体贴 | tǐ tiē | show consideration for |
| 体统 | tǐ tǒng | propriety; decency |
| 体温 | tǐ wēn | body temperature |
| 体系 | tǐ xì | system; set-up |
| 体形 | tǐ xíng | bodily form; build |
| 体验 | tǐ yàn | learn through practice |
| 体育 | tǐ yù | physical training |
| 体重 | tǐ zhòng | body weight |

Example:

他 体 重 六 十 公 斤 。

Tā tǐ zhòng liù shí gōng jīn.

It means, "He weighs sixty kilograms."

果

GUǒ

fruit

果

THE earliest form was a stylised tree sporting a showy display of fruit:  . As it grew mighty, it boasted of more fruit: 果 but these are not easily discernible in the modern form: 果 . The proverb provides a clue to the missing fruit: "Though a tree grows to a thousand feet, its fruits will fall to earth again."



PEVU

果

果断
果敢
果酱
果皮
果品
果然

guǒ duàn
guǒ gǎn
guǒ jiàng
guǒ pí
guǒ pǐn
guǒ rán

resolute; decisive
resolute and
daring
jam
skin of fruit
fruit
as expected; sure
enough

果肉
果实
果树
果园
果汁
果子

guǒ ròu
guǒ shí
guǒ shù
guǒ yuán
guǒ zhī
guǒ zǐ

flesh of fruit
fruit; gain
fruit tree
orchard
fruit juice
fruit

Example:

这果汁太甜了！

Zhè guǒ zhī tài tián le!

It means, "This fruit juice is too sweet!"

课 (課)

KÈ lesson

課, meaning “lesson”, is based on words (言) and fruit (果). A lesson (課) involves the use of words of instruction (言) to produce results, i.e., bear fruit (果). But, for words to be fruitful, take a lesson from the proverb: “Bitter words are medicine; sweet words bring illness.”



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 、 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 | 讠 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | |
|--------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 课本 | kè běn | textbook |
| 课程 | kè chéng | course; curriculum |
| 课堂; 课堂 | kè táng; kè shì | classroom |
| 课外 | kè wài | outside class |
| 课文 | kè wén | text |
| 课余 | kè yú | after school |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 课外活动 | kè wài huó dòng | extra-curricular activities |
| 功课 | gōng kè | homework |
| 上课 | shàng kè | attend class |
| 下课 | xìa kè | finish class |
| 功课表 | gōng kè biǎo | time-table |

Example:

上 课 时 要 注 意 听 讲 。

Shàng kè shí yào zhù yì tīng jiǎng.

It means, “Please pay attention in class.”

巢

CHÁO

nest



THE seal form: 巢 depicts three fledglings in a nest on top of a tree. In the regular form: 巢 the birds remain, but the nest is missing, displaced by fruit (果), though not for long, according to the saying: "If you upset a nest, you cannot expect to find any whole eggs underneath."



PENG



巢穴
匪巢
鸟巢

cháo xué
fěi cháo
niǎo cháo

den; lair
bandits' lair
bird's nest

Example:

树上有一个鸟巢。

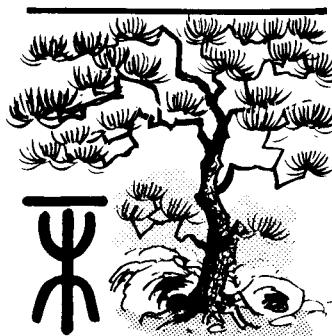
Shù shàng yǒu yí gè niǎo cháo.

It means, "There is a bird's nest on the tree."

末

Mò

tip; end



JUST as the root (木) of a tree (木) is emphasized by a horizontal stroke (—) at its base, so the top of the tree (木) is indicated by a long horizontal line (—) at the top: 末, suggesting the tip or end - its limit. In growing upright like the tree, man also has his limit for, as the proverb puts it, "There are more trees upright than upright men."



PEN4

一 二 才 末

| | | |
|----|---------|-------------------------|
| 末代 | mò dài | last reign of a dynasty |
| 末后 | mò hòu | finally |
| 末了 | mò liǎo | last; finally |
| 末路 | mò lù | dead end |
| 末期 | mò qí | last stage; final phase |

| | | |
|----|---------|--|
| 末日 | mò rì | end; doomsday |
| 周末 | zhōu mò | weekend |
| 末流 | mò liú | the later and decadent stage of a school of thoughts, etc. |

Example:

他 喜 欢 在 周 末 带 孩 子 去 玩 。

Tā xǐ huān zài zhōu mò dài hái zi qù wán.

It means, "He likes to bring his children out during weekends."

未

WÈI

not; not yet

THIS character is to be distinguished from 末 (limit) in that the horizontal stroke across the top is much shorter: 未. In 末 the top line is emphasized; in 未 it is subdued, not fully grown. Hence 未 : not yet. Those who have "not yet" attained their end should exercise patience and take heart from the proverb: "A giant tree grows from a tiny bud."



PENG

一 二 扃 才 未

| | | |
|----|----------|-----------------------------|
| 未必 | wèi bì | not necessarily; may not |
| 未曾 | wèi céng | have not; never |
| 未定 | wèi dìng | uncertain; undecided |
| 未婚 | wèi hūn | unmarried |

| | | |
|------|-----------------|------------------|
| 未来 | wèi lái | future |
| 未完 | wèi wán | unfinished |
| 未详 | wèi xiáng | unknown |
| 未知数 | wèi zhī shù | unknown number |
| 未雨绸缪 | wèi yǔ chóu móu | take precautions |

Example:

他 对 未 来 感 到 茫 然 。

Tā duì wèi lái gǎn dào máng rán .

It means, "He is at a loss over his future."

妹

MÈI

younger sister

未

未, the phonetic, is a tree in full leaf and branch, but not fully mature and means: "not". With the addition of the radical for girl (女), the character for "younger sister" is formed. Hence 妹: a girl (女) who has not yet (未) reached maturity.



PENG

妹 夫 妻 姐 妹 表妹

妹夫

mèi fū

young sister's
husband

妹妹

mèi mei

young sister

表妹

biǎo mèi

youngster female
cousin

Example:

我的表妹长得很漂亮。

Wǒ de biǎo mèi zhǎng de hěn piào liàng.

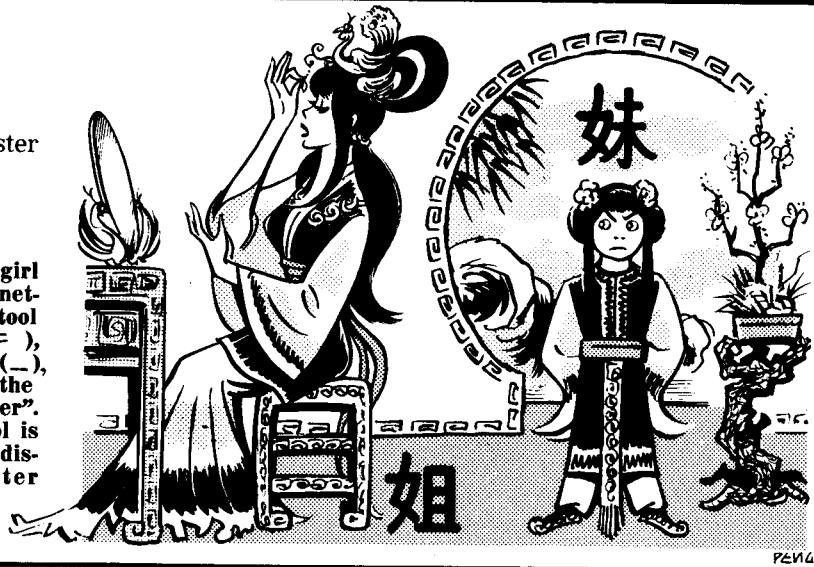
It means, "My cousin is very pretty."

姐

JIĚ

elder sister

女 is the radical for girl or woman. 且, the phonetic, is a picture of a stool (匚) with two rungs (=), standing on the ground (_), now borrowed for the conjunction: 且 “moreover”. In our picture, the stool is not the only thing that distinguishes older sister from younger sister.



PEN

姐 姐 姐 姐 姐 姐 姐

姐夫

jiě fū

elder sister's
husband
elder sister

姐姐

jiě jie

姐妹
表姐

jiě mèi
biǎo jiě

sisters
elder female cousin

Example:

我的姐姐喜欢吃榴莲。

Wǒ de jiě jie xǐ huān chī liú lián.

It means, "My elder sister likes durians."

爱 (愛) AI

love;
affection

THE regular form: 爱 is made up of 呂 (breathe into), 心 (heart) and 夂 (gracious motion), implying that what gives breath to the heart and inspires gracious motion is love — an idealistic love. The simplified form: 爱 highlights the role of friendship: 友 (hand 手 in hand 又 co-operation) — a more realistic love. But whatever form love may take, none can excel the selfless and unselfish love based on the principle extolled in the proverb: "Those who love others will themselves be loved."



DENG



| | | |
|----|---------|----------------------------|
| 爱国 | ài guó | patriotic |
| 爱好 | ài hào | interest; hobby |
| 爱护 | ài hù | cherish; take good care of |
| 爱怜 | ài lián | show tender affection for |
| 爱恋 | ài liàn | be in love with |
| 爱慕 | ài mù | adore; admire |

| | | |
|------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 爱情 | ài qíng | love (between man and woman) |
| 爱人 | ài rén | sweetheart |
| 爱惜 | ài xī | treasure; cherish |
| 爱憎 | ài zēng | love and hate |
| 爱尔兰 | Ai' Ěr Lán | Ireland |
| 爱不释手 | ài bù shì shǒu | fondle admiringly |

Example:

小梅喜欢看爱情小说。

Xiao Mei xǐ huān kàn ài qíng xiǎo shuō.

It means, "Xiao Mei likes to read romances."

想

XIĀNG

think; hope

THIS character is composed of 木 (inspect) and 心 (heart). The phonetic: 相 represents an eye (目) behind a tree (木) on the lookout for possible danger, and signifies to examine or inspect. Combination with the radical: 心 (heart, mind) produces 想, meaning to examine or inspect in the heart or mind, i.e., to think, ponder or hope.



PENG

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| 一 | 十 | 才 | 木 | 木 | 机 | 机 | 相 | 相 | 相 | 想 | 想 | 想 | 想 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|

| | | | | | |
|----|------------|--------------------------------------|------|------------------|--|
| 想到 | xiǎng dào | think of; call to mind | 想起 | xiǎng qǐ | recall |
| 想法 | xiǎng fǎ | think of a way; what one has in mind | 想象 | xiǎng xiāng | imagine; fancy |
| 想来 | xiǎng lái | it may be assumed that | 想不到 | xiǎng bu dào | unexpected |
| 想念 | xiǎng niàn | remember with longing; miss | 想不开 | xiǎng bu kāi | take things too hard; take a matter to heart |
| | | | 想当然 | xiǎng dāng rán | take for granted |
| | | | 想得开 | xiǎng de kāi | not take to heart |
| | | | 想入非非 | xiǎng rù fēi fēi | indulge in fantasy |

Example:

我 想 我 该 走 了 。

Wǒ xiǎng wǒ gāi zǒu le.

It means, "I'm afraid I must be going now."

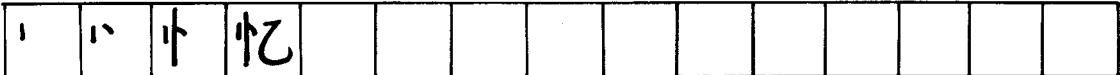
忆(憶)

Yì recall; remember; reflect

THE phonetic: 意 denotes sound (音) in the heart or mind (心), i.e., intention or thought. The addition of another heart (the radical 忄) to thought (意) suggests to think again — to reflect or remember: 忆. As a mnemonic aid, the simplified form combines heart (忄) with second (乙) producing 忆.



PENG



| | | |
|-----|----------|-----------|
| 回忆 | huí yì | recollect |
| 记忆 | jì yì | remember |
| 记忆力 | jì yì lì | memory |

记忆犹新 jì yì yóu xīn remain fresh in one's memory

Example:

我的记忆力很差。

Wǒ de jì yì lì hěn chà.

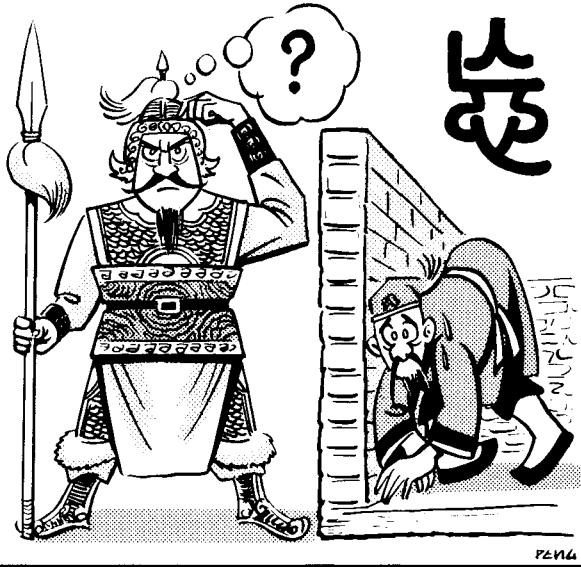
It means, "My memory is very poor."

忘

WÀNG

forget

THE old form of the phonetic: 亡 represents someone entering (入) a place of concealment (宀), and means to disappear or perish: (亾). The addition of the heart radical: 心 enforces the idea of "lost mind" or a mind that ceases to act; hence, to forget: 忘. Minds should not be lost when it comes to the memorable proverb: "Forget favours given: remember favours received."



| | | |
|----|-----------|---------------------|
| 忘本 | wàng běn | forget one's origin |
| 忘掉 | wàng diào | forget |
| 忘怀 | wàng huái | forget |
| 忘记 | wàng jì | forget |
| 忘情 | wàng qíng | be unmoved |
| 忘我 | wàng wǒ | selfless |

| | | |
|------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 忘形 | wàng xíng | be beside oneself |
| 忘年交 | wàng nián jiāo | friendship between generations |
| 忘恩负义 | wàng'ēn fù yì | ungrateful |
| 健忘 | jiàn wàng | forgetful |

Example:

别忘记替我买水果。

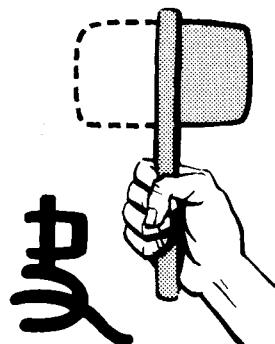
Bié wàng jì tì wǒ mǎi shuǐ guǒ.

It means, "Don't forget to buy fruits for me."

快

KUÀI

quick; fast



快 has two components: 忄 (heart) and 夂. An old form of 夂 is 扌, representing a hand (手) holding half (半) of a bilateral object (中) that may be easily or quickly split. In another form, the hand is shown drawing a bow-string, ready to shoot an arrow: 弓. As quickness depends on the mind or heart, the heart component (心) is added to reinforce the idea of quick or fast: 快.



| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 快 | 步 | 快 | 快 | 快 | 快 | 快 | 快 | 快 | 快 | 快 | 快 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|----|----------|----------------------|------|------------------|---------------|
| 快步 | kuài bù | trot | 快乐 | kuài lè | happy |
| 快餐 | kuài cān | quick meal; snack | 快慢 | kuài mǎn | speed |
| 快车 | kuài chē | express train or bus | 快速 | kuài sù | fast |
| 快感 | kuài gǎn | pleasant sensation | 快艇 | kuài tǐng | speedboat |
| 快活 | kuài huó | merry | 快马加鞭 | kuài mǎ jiā biān | at high speed |

Example:

我有一个快乐的家庭。

Wǒ yǒu yí gè kuài lè de jiā tíng.

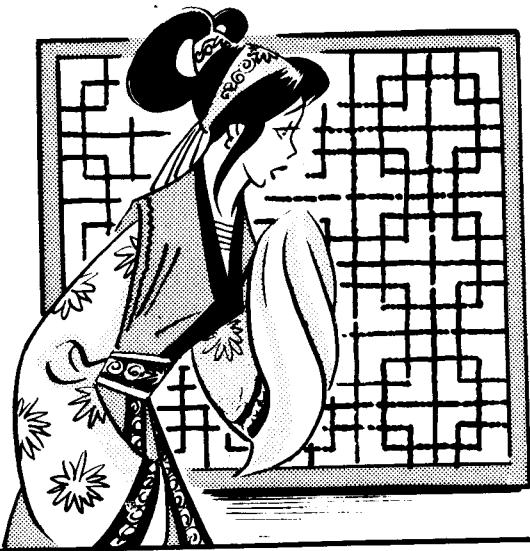
It means, "I have a happy family."

匆 (忽)

CÔNG

haste; hurry; alarm

THE original ideograph depicted a restless heart (心) prompting one to peep anxiously through the window (窗). Hence the meaning: haste, excitement or alarm. The haste shown even in the evolution of this exciting character — from the seal form: 急 to 息 and 忽 and, with utter disregard for the heart (心), in the final form: 匆 — gives cause for alarm.



急 息 忽 匆

匆 匆 匆 匆

匆匆

cōng cōng

hurriedly

匆促

cōng cù

hastily

匆忙

cōng máng

hastily; hurried

Example:

他 匆 匆 吃 了 早 餐 便 上 学 。

Tā cōng cōng chī le zǎo cān biàn shàng xué .

It means, "After hurrying through his breakfast, he went to school."