

# FUN WITH CHINESE CHARACTERS

# 3

## The Straits Times Collection



# **FUN WITH CHINESE CHARACTERS**

**The Straits Times Collection ③**

Cartoonist: Tan Huay Peng



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## **PREFACE**

**Fun With Chinese Characters Volume 3** features another 140 characters which first appeared in the *Straits Times Bilingual Page*. They trace systematically the evolution of Chinese characters from pictographs and ideographs, introducing radical elements and compounds with the appreciative and discerning eye of a cartoonist.

This final collection in the highly popular and successful *Fun With Chinese Characters Series* includes an indispensable index of all the characters found in the series for easy reference.

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107	喜	xǐ	116	客	kè	125	高	gāo	134	众	zhòng
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111	鸣	míng	120	答	dá	129	贫	pín	138	去	qù
112	吐	tǔ	121	篮	lán	130	圆	yuán	139	回	huí
113	如	rú	122	井	jǐng	131	儿	ér	140	凸	tū
										凹	āo

王

WÁNG

king; ruler

**THREE** horizontal planes (三) representing heaven, man and earth, connected by a vertical structure (丨), form the character for king: 王 — the one vested with power, between heaven and earth, to rule uprightly over man. Originally 王 was a pictograph of a string of jade beads (王) which only the royalty could afford. It eventually became the symbol for king.



王 王 王 王 王

FENG

一 二 干 王

国王	guó wáng	king
王朝	wáng cháo	imperial court; dynasty
王储	wáng chǔ	crown prince
王法	wáng fǎ	the law
王公贵族	wáng gōng guì zú	the nobility

王宫	wáng gōng	(imperial) palace
王牌	wáng pái	trump card
王室	wáng shì	royal family; imperial court
王位	wáng wèi	throne
王族	wáng zú	persons of royal lineage

*Example:*

国王死后，王子将继承王位。

Guó wáng · sǐ hòu wáng zǐ jiāng jì chéng wáng wèi

When the king dies, the prince will succeed to the throne.

玉

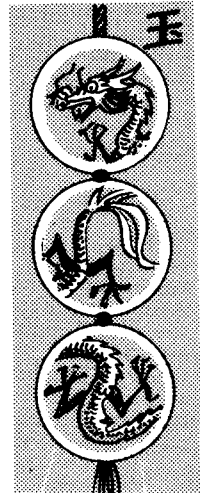
yù

jade; gem

三 represents 3 pieces of jade strung together as a symbol for king: 王. The dot (丶) was added to form 玉 (jade), distinguishing it from 王 (king). Highly valued as a symbol of excellence and purity, jade may be found in its crude form, hidden in rough stone. Hence the saying: "Jade which is not chiselled and polished is not an article of beauty."



王  
王  
王  
王  
王



P216

一 二 干 王 玉

- |      |                  |  |
|------|------------------|--|
| 玉雕   | yù diāo          | jade carving; jade sculpture                   |
| 玉皇大帝 | yù huáng dà dì   | the Jade Emperor (the Supreme Deity of Taoism) |
| 玉洁冰清 | yù jié bīng qīng | as pure as jade and as clean as ice            |
| 玉器   | yù qì            | jade article                                   |
| 玉色   | yù sè            | jade green; light bluish green                 |
| 玉蜀黍  | yù shǔ shǔ       | maize; corn                                    |
| 玉兔   | yù tù            | the Jade Hare – the moon                       |
| 玉簪   | yù zān           | jade hairpin                                   |

Example:

这个玉雕不便宜。

Zhè ge yù diāo bù pián yì

This jade carving is not cheap.



# 国 (國)

GUÓ country; nation

國 is composed of 囗 (boundary), 一 (land), 口 (mouth) and 戈 (spear). 國 therefore means land, people and weapons within a boundary — a country. The simplified form puts only 玉 (jade, representing king) within the boundary (口) to produce nation: 国. But a king needs subjects as much as subjects need food: “People are the nation’s source; food is the primary need of the people.”



FENG



国宾	guó bīn	state guest
国策	guó cè	national policy
国产	guó chǎn	made in our country
国都	guó dū	national capital
国法	guó fǎ	the law of the land
国防	guó fáng	national defence
国歌	guó gē	national anthem

国会	guó huì	parliament
国籍	guó jí	nationality
国际	guó jì	international
国内市场	guó nèi shì chǎng	domestic market
国庆	guó qìng	National Day
国事访问	guó shì fǎng wèn	state visit

Example:

唱国歌时要立正。

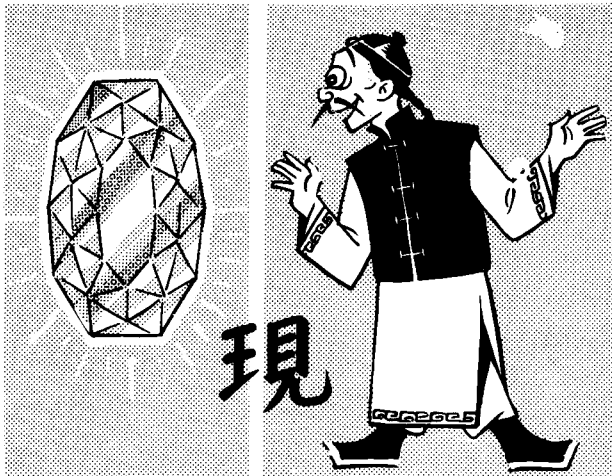
Chàng guó gē shí yào lì zhèng

Stand at attention when singing the national anthem.

# 现 (現)

XIÀN appear; reveal; now

THE radical is 玉 (jade, gem) contracted to 王. The phonetic 見, representing eyes (目) of man (儿), means to see. So 现 means the sight of a sparkling gem, its appearance at that very moment; now. Appearances may be revealing or deceptive. According to the saying: "Fine words and appearance are seldom associated with virtue."



PEN 6

一	二	千	王	见	见	现	现								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

现场	xiàn chǎng	出现	scene (of an incident)
现成	xiàn chéng	现成	ready-made
现代	xiàn dài	现代	modern times; the contemporary age
现款	xiàn kuǎn	现款	ready money; cash
现实	xiàn shí	现实	reality; actuality

现象	xiàn xiàng	现象	appearance (of things); phenomenon
现有	xiàn yǒu	现有	now available; existing
现在	xiàn zài	现在	now; at present; today
出现	chū xiàn	出现	appear
发现	fā xiàn	发现	discover

### Example:

她脸上现出一丝笑容。

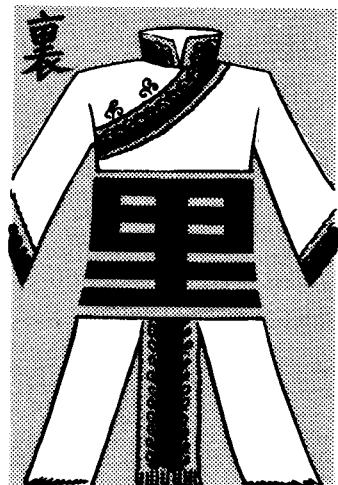
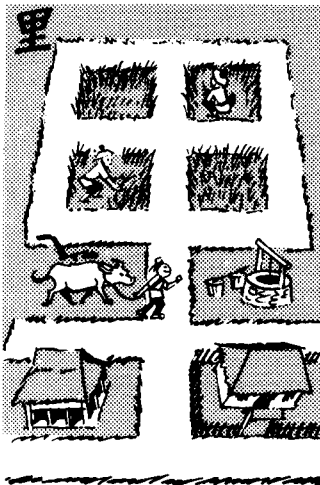
Tā liǎn shàng xiàn chū yī sī xiào róng

A faint smile appeared on her face.

里

Lǐ village; mile; inside

里 originally was a village made up of 田 (fields) and 土 (earth). The average length of one side, about 600 metres, became a measure of length: 里, a Chinese mile. 里 is also the simplified form of 裏. Here the radical for clothes (衣) is split and lined inside with the phonetic 里 to suggest inside: 裏.



FENG



- |     |              |                                |
|-----|--------------|--------------------------------|
| 里边  | lǐ bian      | inside; in; within             |
| 里程  | lǐ chéng     | mileage; course of development |
| 里程碑 | lǐ chéng bēi | milestone                      |
| 里海  | Lǐ Hǎi       | the Caspian Sea                |
| 里面  | lǐ miàn      | inside; interior               |
| 里头  | lǐ tou       | inside; interior               |

Example:

屋子里面充满阳光。

Wū zi lǐ miàn chōng mǎn yáng guāng

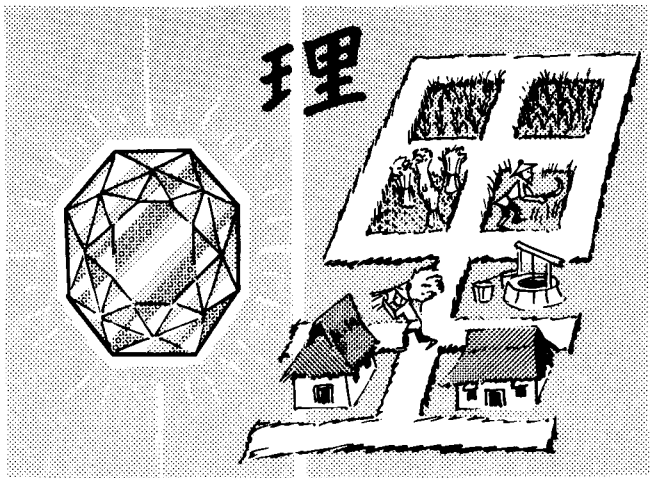
The house is filled with sunshine.

# 理

Lǐ

polish;  
reason;  
principle

玉 (gem) is the radical, and the phonetic 里 is made up of 田 (field) and 土 (land). 理 compares the cutting of a gem to the dividing of field and land, both done according to fixed rules and principles; hence the extended meaning: reason, principle. The old saying highlights the importance of a moral standard: "A man of talent without principle is inferior to a simpleton with principle."



PENG

一	二	千	王	玨	玨	玨	玨	玨	理	理				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

理睬 lǐ cǎi (usually in the negative)  
pay attention to;  
show interest in

理发 lǐ fà haircut; hairdressing

理会 lǐ huì understand; comprehend

理解 lǐ jiě understand; comprehend

理科 lǐ kē science (as a school subject)

理论 lǐ lùn theory

理事会 lǐ shì huì council; board of directors

理所当然 lǐ suǒ dāng rán of course; naturally

理想 lǐ xiǎng ideal

理性 lǐ xìng reason

理由 lǐ yóu reason; ground; argument

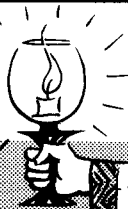
理智 lǐ zhì reason; intellect

Example:

我有充分理由相信他的话。  
Wǒ yǒu chōng fèn lǐ yóu xiāng xìn tā de huà.  
I have every reason to believe his words.

主

主 主 主



ZHǚ owner; master

主 is a pictograph of a lampstand with the flame rising above it. It symbolises a man who spreads light — a lord or master. To shed light, the master himself needs the enlightening counsel: "If you suspect a man, don't employ him; if you employ a man, don't suspect him."

PENG

丶 亠 二 丰 主

主办	zhǔ bàn	direct; sponsor
主持	zhǔ chí	chair (a discussion); host (a banquet)
主动	zhǔ dòng	initiative
主队	zhǔ duì	home team; host team
主妇	zhǔ fù	housewife; hostess
主观	zhǔ guān	subjective
主管	zhǔ guǎn	person in charge

主人	zhǔ rén	master
主任	zhǔ rèn	director; chairman
主使	zhǔ shǐ	instigate; incite; abet
主题	zhǔ tí	theme; subject; motif
主席	zhǔ xí	chairman (of a meeting)
主要	zhǔ yào	main; chief; principal
主义	zhǔ yì	doctrine; -ism
主意	zhǔ yì	idea; plan; decision

Example:

我们应该主动去接近他。

Wǒ men yīng gāi zhǔ dòng qù jiē jìn tā

We ought to take the initiative to befriend him.

# 住

ZHŪ

live;  
reside;  
stay

人 (man) is combined with 主 (master) to form 住, meaning to dwell. In ancient days, the man (人) was always master (主) of his dwelling; so the combination 住 suggests to dwell, to stay. In modern times, however, some husbands still boss the house; others house the boss.



ノ 亻 亻 亻 住 住 住 住

住户	zhù hù	household; resident
住口	zhù kǒu	shut up; stop talking
住手	zhù shǒu	stay one's hand; stop
住宿	zhù sù	stay; put up; get accommodation
住院	zhù yuàn	be in hospital; be hospitalized
住宅	zhù zhái	residence; dwelling

*Example:*

他大部分时间在学校住宿。

Tā dà bù fēn shí jiān zài xué xiào zhù sù

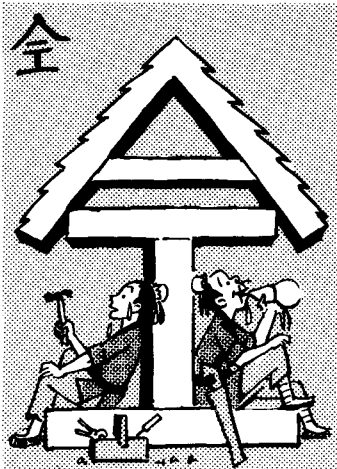
He stayed at the school most of the time.

全

QUÁN

complete;  
perfect

THIS character was first written 全 or 𠄎, combining 人 (joined) with 工 (work). It means completed, i.e., the components are assembled and the work finished. However, the modern character, classified under 人 (in), could be interpreted as a jade (王 or 玉) skilfully inlaid (入), and so flawless and perfect: 全. But perfection is not always the crucial thing: "Better an imperfect jade than a perfect tile."



PEMG

ノ 人 人 全 全 全

全部	quán bù	whole; complete; total; all
全才	quán cái	a versatile person; all-rounder
全场	quán chǎng	the whole audience; all those present
全国性	quán guó xìng	nationwide
全集	quán jí	complete works; collected works
全景	quán jǐng	panorama; full view

全局	quán jú	overall situation
全力	quán lì	with all one's strength
全面	quán miàn	overall; comprehensive
全年	quán nián	annual; yearly
全球	quán qiú	the whole world
全套	quán tào	complete set

Example:

我们全家人出去了。

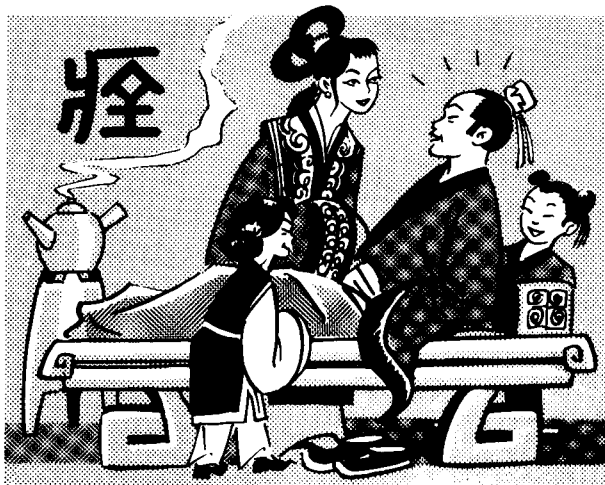
Wǒ men quán jiā rén chū qu le

My family had gone out.

# 痊

QUÁN recover from illness

THE radical 疒 (originally 疒) represents a sick patient lying down (一) on a bed (月). The phonetic 全 means finished or completed. The combination 痊 is based on the belief of physicians that when a disease (疒) has run its full course (全), the patient recovers: 痊.



P414

、 一 疒 疒 疒 疒 疒 疒 疒 痊 痊 痊 痊 痊

痊愈 quǎn yù fully recover from an illness

*Example:*

他的病还没有完全痊愈。

Tā de bìng hái méi yǒu wán quán quǎn yù

He has not fully recovered from his illness.



# 米

Mǐ

rice  
(uncooked)

米 is a pictograph of a rice stalk. Its original form depicted nine grains of rice 𪎭. This was modified to 𪎮 and finally 米, symbolising grains (丩) separated in the four quarters (+) by threshing. Although the rice-bowl may represent an honest means of living, "rice obtained by crookedness will not boil up into good food."



𪎭  
𪎮  
米  
米  
米  
米



PEW6

、 丩 丩 米

- |    |        |                                |
|----|--------|--------------------------------|
| 米波 | mǐ bō  | metric wave                    |
| 米粉 | mǐ fěn | rice-flour noodles; vermicelli |
| 米酒 | mǐ jiǔ | rice wine                      |
| 米粒 | mǐ lì  | grain of rice                  |
| 米色 | mǐ sè  | cream-coloured                 |
| 米制 | mǐ zhì | the metric system              |

Example:

这米煮得太烂了。

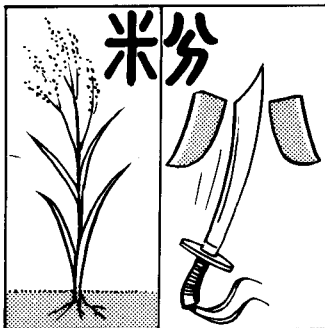
Zhè mǐ zhǔ de tài làn le

This rice is overcooked.

# 粉

FĚN

powder



FACE powder in China was once made by grinding rice into fine particles. Hence the ideograph: 粉 meaning face powder — from 米 (rice) and 分 (divide, grind). The radical 米 is a likeness of a rice stalk and the phonetic 分 is a picture of a knife severing an object. 粉 now stands for anything ground into powder.



FENG

、	ノ	辶	艹	牙	米	米	米	粉	粉						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

粉笔	fěn bǐ	粉笔	chalk
粉刺	fěn cǐ	粉刺	acne
粉红	fěn hóng	粉红	pink
粉身碎骨	fěn shēn suì gǔ	粉身碎骨	have one's body smashed to pieces; die the most cruel death
粉刷	fěn shuā	粉刷	whitewash
粉丝	fěn sī	粉丝	vermicelli made from bean starch, etc.
粉碎	fěn suì	粉碎	smash; shatter; crush

*Example:*

他把米磨成粉。

Tā bǎ mǐ mó chéng fěn

He grinds the rice into powder form.





# 食

SHÍ eat; food



PE116

食, to eat, is the radical relating to food in general. Its seal form shows that it is made up of 人 (together) and 食 (boiled grain, food). 食 itself is a pictograph of the rice-pot (囗) and its contents (-) with a spoon or ladle (匕). 食 is the signal to come together (人) to eat the food (食). But food, like knowledge, needs to be properly digested. So: "Be quick over your work, but not over your food."

ノ 人 人 今 今 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食 食

月食	yuè shí	lunar eclipse
主食	zhǔ shí	staple food
食粮	shí liáng	grain; food
食品	shí pǐn	foodstuff; food; provisions
食谱	shí pǔ	recipes; cookbook

食宿	shí sù	board and lodging
食堂	shí táng	dining room; mess hall; canteen
食物	shí wù	food; eatables; edibles
食言	shí yán	go back on one's word; break one's promise
食指	shí zhǐ	index finger

Example:

米是亚洲人的主食。

Mǐ shì Yà zhōu rén de zhǔ shí

Rice is the staple food of Asians.

# 饭 (飯)

FÀN rice (cooked)

飯, the character for cooked rice, comes from the radical 食 (food) and the phonetic 反 meaning return. 反 represents the repetitive motion (了) of the hand (又), as in eating (食). Although hungry people are not fastidious about food, "One speck of rat's dung spoils a whole pot of rice." In combination, 食 is simplified to 饣.



FEM6

丿 勹 饣 𠂇 𠂇 𠂇 饭 飯

饭菜	fàn cài	meal; repast
饭店	fàn diàn	restaurant
饭锅	fàn guō	pot for cooking rice; rice cooker
饭桶	fàn tǒng	rice bucket; big eater; good-for-nothing
饭碗	fàn wǎn	rice bowl; job; means of livelihood
饭桌	fàn zhuō	dining table

## Example:

这餐厅饭菜可口，服务又周到。

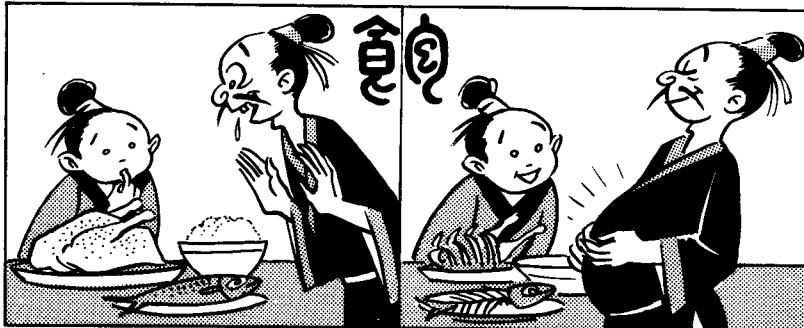
Zhè cān tīng fàn cài kě kǒu fú wù yòu zhōu dào

This restaurant offers tasty food and good service.

# 饱 (飽)

**Bǎo** eat to the full

包 the phonetic combines with 食, the radical for food, to form 飽 (satiated). The seal form of 包 is 𠔁, depicting a foetus enclosed in the body; hence the meaning wrapped up. 飽 therefore means food all wrapped up in the stomach, i.e., fully satisfied. However, as the saying goes: "Better be hungry and pure than well-filled and corrupt."



FZM4

'	丩	包	𠔁	饱	饱	饱	饱						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

饱含	bǎo hán	filled with
饱和	bǎo hé	saturation
饱满	bǎo mǎn	full; plump
饱学	bǎo xué	learned

*Example:*

她的眼睛饱含着幸福的热泪。

Tā de yǎn jīng bǎo hán zhe xìng fú de rè lèi

Her eyes were filled with tears of joy.

# 饿 (餓)

THIS character is based on the radical for food: 食. It literally means feed (食) me (我) — a fitting sign for hunger. Another character for hunger is 餓, literally: little (幾) food (食), simplified to 饥, i.e., food (斤) on small table (几). Although hunger is no respecter of persons, “Even a hungry person will refuse food offered in contempt.”

è hungry

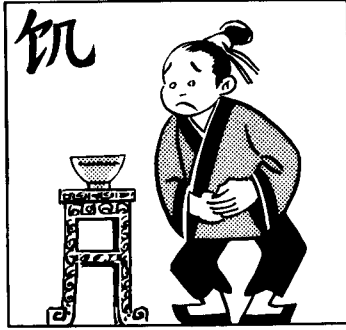
## 餓



## 餓



## 饥



FENG

丿 ㇇ 𠂇 𠂈 𠂉 饣 饣 饿 饿 饿

挨饿

āi è

go hungry

饥饿

jī è

hunger; starvation

饿虎扑食

è hǔ pū shí

like a hungry tiger pouncing on its prey

*Example:*

他挣扎在饥饿线上。

Tā zhēng zhá zài jī è xiàn shàng

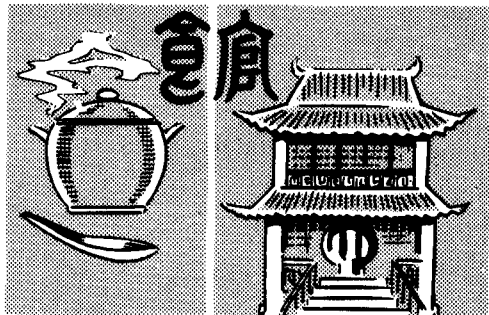
She struggled along on the verge of death.



# 馆 (館)

THE food radical 食 combines with 官 to produce 馆, a public building. The phonetic '官 (official) originally meant the residence of an official — the hall (山) of the city (官). 食 (food) together with '官 suggests a public building doing food business — inn, hotel or restaurant. Hence: "An innkeeper never worries if your appetite is big."

GUǎN hotel; restaurant



丿 勹 匕 匕 匕 匕 竹 竹 馆 馆 馆 馆

- |     |              |                    |
|-----|--------------|--------------------|
| 旅馆  | lǚ guǎn      | hotel              |
| 美术馆 | měi shù guǎn | art gallery        |
| 体育馆 | tí yù guǎn   | gymnasium; stadium |
| 图书馆 | tú shū guǎn  | library            |

Example:

这旅馆的布置很堂皇。

Zhè lǚ guǎn de bù zhì hěn táng huáng

The hotel's decor is very impressive.

# 饮

# (飲)

# 𩚑

# 𩚑



Yǐn drink

BASED on the food radical 食, this character has a significant phonetic 欠, suggesting breath. 欠 originally was a pictograph of a man opening his mouth to catch his breath, as in drinking: 𩚑. This was modified to 𩚑, representing air waves (𩚑) emanating from the man (儿). The primitive form of the character for drink shows clearly a drinking flask (𩚑) as part of the food radical.

丿	㇇	𠃉	𠃊	𩚑	𩚑	饮								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

饮茶	yǐn chá	drink tea
饮弹	yǐn dàn	be hit by a bullet
饮恨	yǐn hèn	nurse a grievance
饮料	yǐn liào	drink; beverage
饮泣	yǐn qì	weep in silence
饮食	yǐn shí	food and drink; diet
饮用水	yǐn yòng shuǐ	drinking water; potable water

Example:

他喜欢早上在茶楼饮茶。

Tā xǐ huān zǎo shàng zài chá lóu yǐn chá

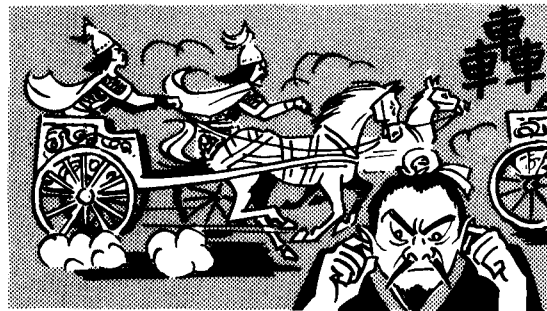
He likes to drink tea at the teahouse in the morning.



轰 (轟)

轰 is the triple form of the noisy cart (車). It serves as a fitting symbol for any loud or explosive sound like the rumbling of many carts. In the simplified form, 又 (again; ditto) replaces each of the two lower carts to produce 轰. 又 itself is a simplified picture of the right hand; and the right hand, returning repeatedly to the mouth in eating, suggests "again".

HŌNG bang; boom (noise; uproar)



PHOTO

一 土 车 车 轰 轰 轰 轰

轰动	hōng dòng	cause a sensation; make a stir
轰轰烈烈	hōng hōng liè liè	on a grand and spectacular scale; vigorous; dynamic
轰击	hōng jī	shell; bombard
轰隆	hōng lōng	rumble; roll
轰鸣	hōng míng	thunder; roar
轰炸	hōng zhà	bomb

Example:

她的超级迷你裙使全场轰动起来。

Tā de chāo jí mí nǐ qún shǐ quán chǎng hōng dòng qǐ lái

Her ultra-miniskirt caused a stir at the party.

库 (庫)

KÙ storehouse

JUST as 宀 is a picture of a roof, representing hut, so 广 is half a hut — a shed or shop with an open front. 庫 originally was a shed (广) for carts (車). But, before long, it came to be used for storing grain and all sorts of goods. Hence 庫: a storehouse, warehouse, granary or depot.



丶 宀 广 户 庄 库 库

军械库	jūn xiè kù	armoury
仓库	cāng kù	storehouse; warehouse
库藏	kù cáng	have in storage
库存	kù cún	stock; reserve
库房	kù fáng	storehouse

*Example:*

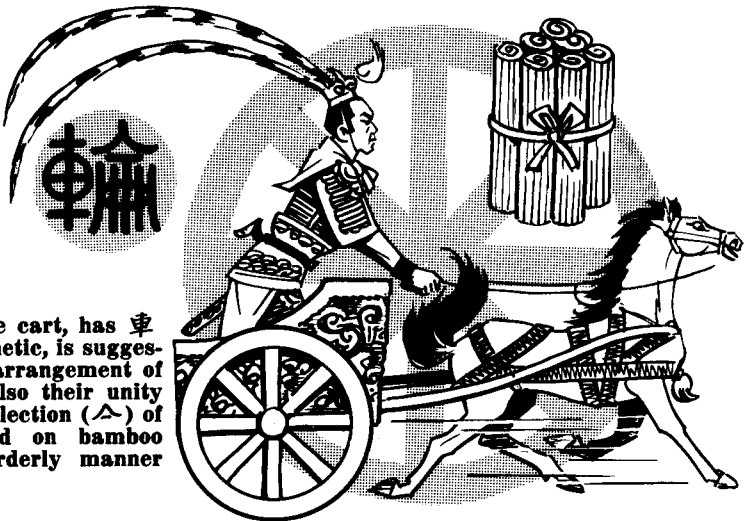
这仓库可以容纳大量货物。

Zhè cāng kù kě yǐ róng nà dà liàng huò wù

This warehouse can accommodate a large amount of goods.

# 轮 (輪)

LÚN  
wheel



車輪, the wheel that moves the cart, has 車 (cart) for radical. 命, its phonetic, is suggestive, not only of the orderly arrangement of the spokes of a wheel, but also their unity and stability. It signifies a collection (△) of ancient documents preserved on bamboo slips tied together in an orderly manner (冊).

PEM6

一 士 车 车 车 车 车 轮

轮班	lún bān	in shifts; in relays
轮齿	lún chí	teeth of a cogwheel
轮船	lún chuán	steamer
轮渡	lún dù	ferry
轮换	lún huàn	rotate; take turns
轮机	lún jī	turbine

轮廓	lún kuò	outline; contour; rough sketch
轮流	lún liú	take turns; do something in turn
轮胎	lún tāi	tyre
轮椅	lún yǐ	wheelchair
轮轴	lún zhóu	wheel and axle
轮子	lún zi	wheel

*Example:*

这个车轮被刮坏了。

Zhè ge chē lún bèi guā huài le

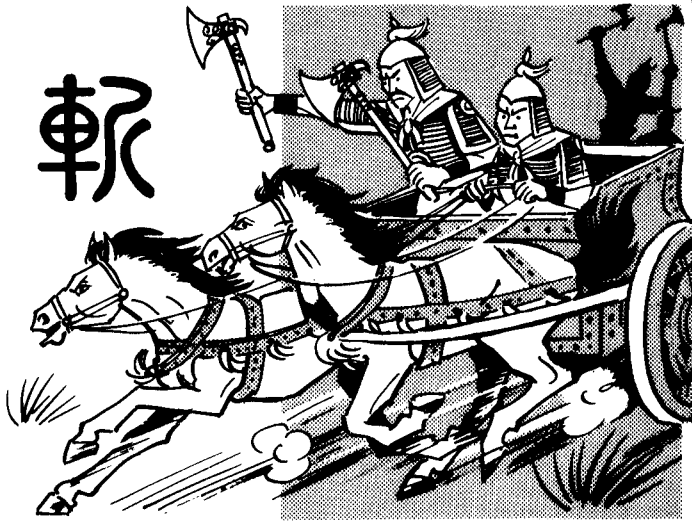
The wheel of this car was badly scratched.



# 斩 (斬)

ZHǎN chop off

斩 probably has reference to a war chariot (車) with warriors wielding axes (斤) to cut off the enemy. It may also mean to whirl or brandish (揮) a battle axe (斤). But cutting off an enemy does not eradicate the source of trouble; hence the saying: "When cutting the weeds, get rid of the root" (斩草除根).



一 士 车 车 车' 斩 斩 斩

斩草除根	zhǎn cǎo chú gēn	destroy root and branch — stamp out the source of trouble
斩钉截铁	zhǎn dīng jié tiě	resolute and decisive; categorical
斩断	zhǎn duàn	chop off
斩首	zhǎn shǒu	behead; decapitate

Example:

他的手被机器斩断了。

Tā de shǒu bèi jī qì zhǎn duàn le

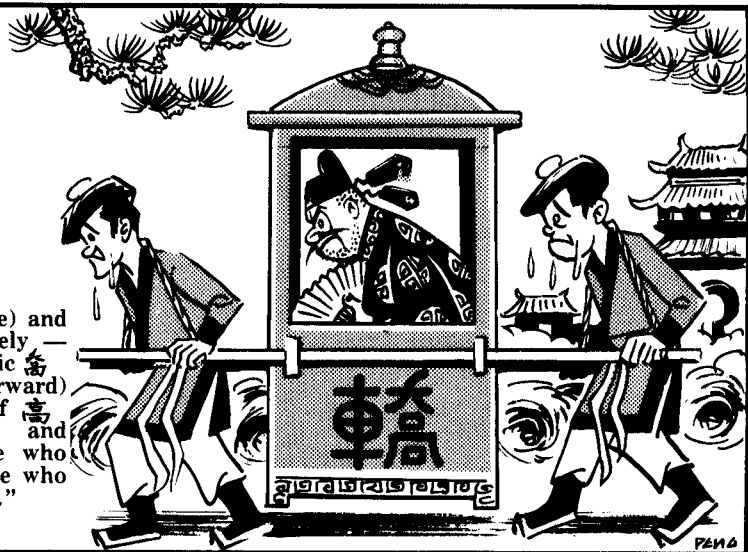
His hands were chopped off by the machine.



# 轿 (轎)

JIAO sedan-chair

轿 is composed of 車 (vehicle) and 高, something high and stately — the sedan chair. The phonetic 备 combines 夫 (man leaning forward) with a contracted form of 高 (high). Although the high and mighty travel in sedans, "He who rides in the chair is a man; he who carries the chair is also a man."



一 七 车 车 车 轎 轎 轎 轎

轿车	jiào chē	car
轿子	jiào zi	sedan chair
花轿	huā jiào	bridal sedan chair

*Example:*

古时候的华人新娘是坐花轿的。

Gǔ shí huò de huá rén xīn niáng shì zuò huā jiào de

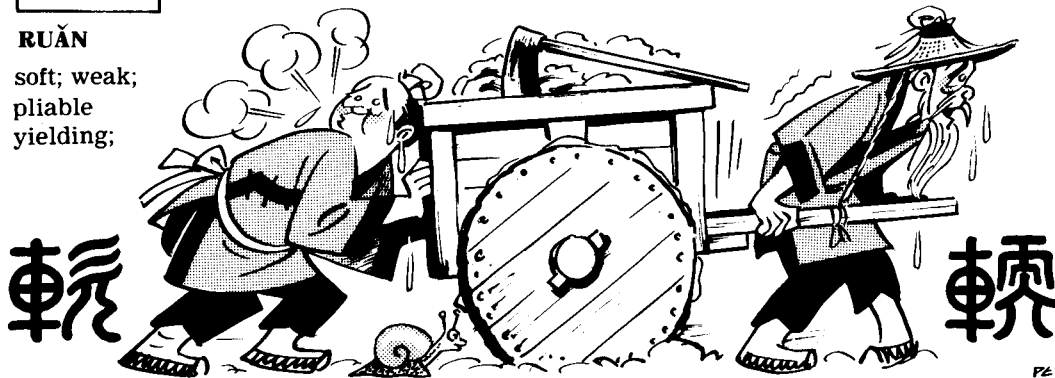
In the olden days, Chinese brides rode on bridal sedan chairs.

# 软 (軟)

RUǎN

soft; weak;  
pliable  
yielding;

THE mobility of the carriage (車) is used to good effect in this character. Combined with 欠, it produces 軟, meaning soft and weak or pliable and flexible, 欠 signifying a man (儿) gasping for breath (乏), i.e., exhausted, deficient. 軟 may also be written 軟, the phonetic 欠 representing the soft beard (而) of a man (大).



一 土 车 车 车 软 软 软

软钢	ruǎn gāng	mild steel; soft steel
软骨头	ruǎn gú tou	a weak-kneed person; a spineless person; a coward
软骨	ruǎn gǔ	cartilage
软化	ruǎn huà	soften; win over by soft tactics
软和	ruǎn huo	gentle; kind; soft
软件	ruǎn jiàn	software
软禁	ruǎn jìn	put somebody under house arrest
软弱	ruǎn ruò	weak; feeble; flabby

*Example:*

她被他的甜言蜜语软化了。

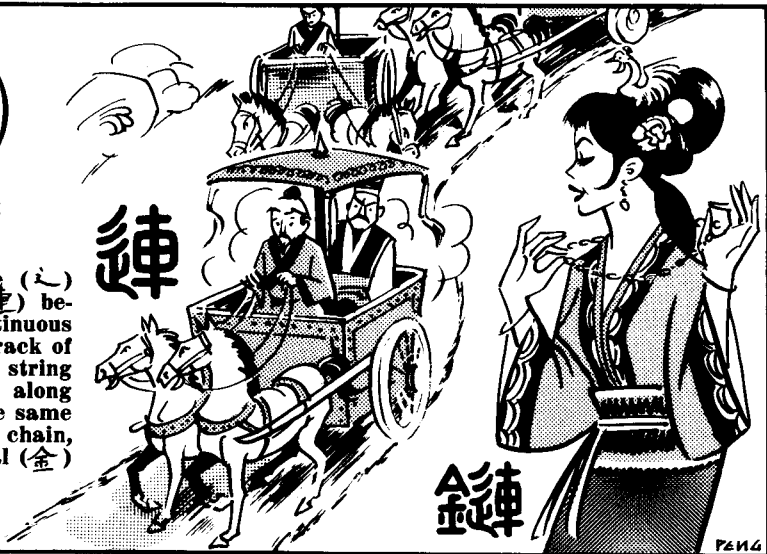
Tā bèi tā de tián yán mì yǔ ruǎn huà le

She was won over by his sweet words.

# 连 (連)

LIÁN link; join; connect

CARTS (車) on the move (之) form a connecting link (連) between places, leaving a continuous track, not broken like the track of man. 連 also represents a string of carriages (車) moving along (之) as if connected. By the same token 鏈, the character for chain, is made up of rings of metal (金) linked (連) together.



一	士	车	车	车	连														
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

- |     |               |   |
|-----|---------------|---|
| 连贯  | lián guàn     | link up; piece together; hang together; coherent; consistent                    |
| 连环画 | lián huán huà | a book (usually for children) with a story told in pictures; picture story book |
| 连累  | lián lěi      | implicate; involve; get somebody into trouble                                   |
| 连忙  | lián máng     | promptly; at once   |
| 连日  | lián rì       | for days on end; day after day  |
| 连同  | lián tóng     | together with; along with   |
| 连续  | lián xù       | continuous; successive  |
| 连夜  | lián yè       | the same night; that very night   |

*Example:*

小梅喜欢看香港的连续剧。

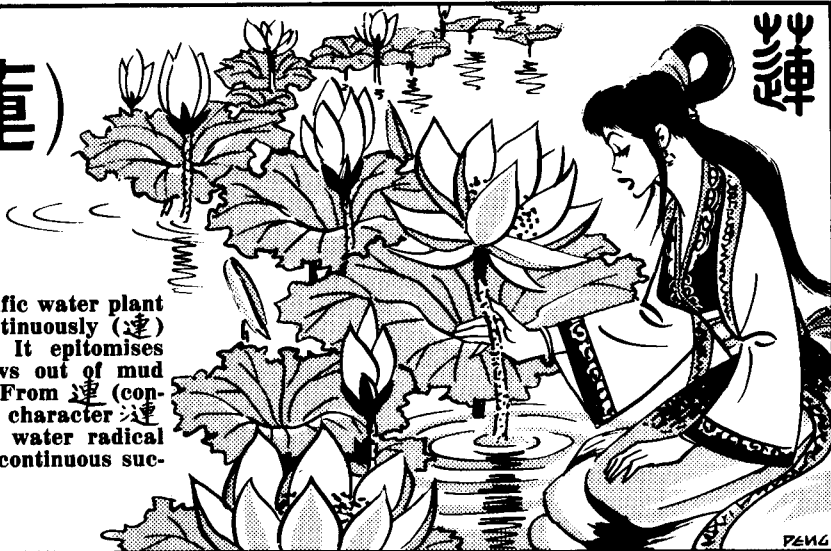
*Xiǎo méi xǐ huān kàn Xiāng Gǎng de lián xù jù*

Xiaomei likes to watch the Hongkong serialised dramas.

# 莲 (蓮)

LIÁN lotus

莲 the lotus, is a prolific water plant (艹) that spreads continuously (連) like a flowery chain. It epitomises purity because it grows out of mud but remains undefiled. From 連 (connect) also comes the character 漣 (ripples) based on the water radical 氵 - ripples being a continuous succession (連) of waves.



莲花	lián huā	lotus flower
莲蓬	lián peng	seedpod of the lotus
莲蓬头	lián peng tóu	shower nozzle
莲子	lián zi	lotus seed

Example:

莲花是生长在水里的。

Lián huā shì shēng zhǎng zài shuǐ lǐ de

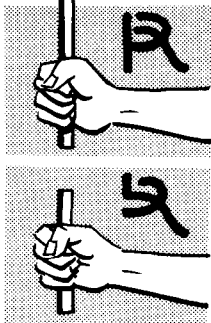
Lotus flowers grow in water.

父

FÙ

father

THE Chinese proverb defines father as “a man who, in praising his son, extols himself”. Accordingly, the seal form 𠤎 depicts father as a disciplinarian — the right hand (𠂇) wielding the rod of authority (丨). Eventually the rod is contracted: 𠂇 and then broken: 父. Apparently: “It is easy to govern a kingdom but difficult to rule one’s family.”



丶 八 分 父

父母	fù mǔ	father and mother; parents
父亲	fù qin	father
父权制	fù quán zhì	patriarchy
父兄	fù xiōng	father and elder brothers; head of a family

Example:

我的父亲是个慈祥的人。

Wǒ de fù qin shì ge cí xiáng de rén

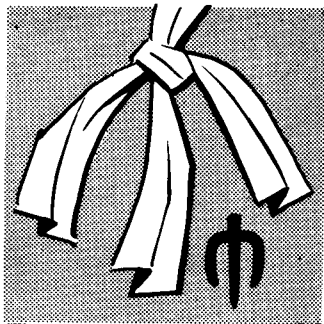
My father is a kindly person.

巾

JĪN

napkin; towel;  
handkerchief

巾 is a pictograph of a small piece of cloth used for cleaning, dusting or wiping. In ancient times it was worn, suspended from the girdle. 冫 represents the two extremities of the cloth hanging (丨) from the girdle. 巾 forms the radical of a series of characters relating to cloth in general.



巾

巾	jīn guó	woman
巾帼英雄	jīn guó yīng xióng	a heroine .
餐巾	cān jīn	napkin
手巾	shǒu jīn	hand towel
头巾	tóu jīn	headdress
围巾	wéi jīn	scarf

*Example:*

她用手巾抹脸。

Tā yòng shǒu jīn ma liǎn

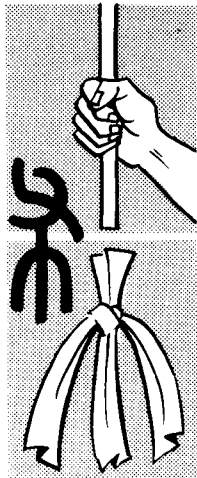
She uses the towel to wipe her face.

布

BÙ

cloth

THIS character is based on the radical for cloth: 巾. The phonetic 父 (father) is discernible as 父 in the seal form 𠂔. 父 is a picture of the right hand (父) with the rod of authority (丨), and implies discipline, control and order – as essential in weaving as in marrying. So the saying goes: “Hasty weaving produces shoddy cloth; a girl who marries in haste has a fool for a husband.”



一	ナ	才	右	布							
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

- |     |            |   |
|-----|------------|---|
| 布道  | bù dào     | preach  |
| 布丁  | bù dīng    | pudding   |
| 布防  | bù fáng    | place troops on garrison duty   |
| 布告  | bù gào     | notice; bulletin; proclamation  |
| 布谷鸟 | bù gǔ niǎo | cuckoo  |
| 布匹  | bù pǐ      | cloth; piece goods  |
| 布置  | bù zhì     | fix up; arrange; decorate; assign; make arrangements for; give instructions about |

Example:

用这匹布做成衣服，一定很漂亮。

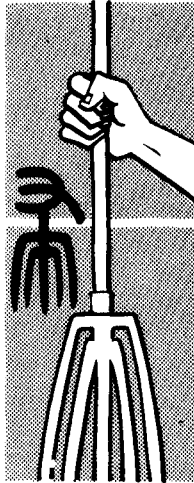
Yòng zhè pǐ bù zuò chéng yī fu yī dīng hěn piào liàng

This cloth will make a pretty dress.

ZHǒU

broom;  
duster

IN the seal form 帚, broom is suggested by a hand (又) with an improvised broom (𠂔) — double cloth (巾) attached to a handle (丨). Although a helping hand (才) can easily turn 帚 (broom) into 掃 (sweep), “no one will sweep a public hall used by everyone.”



扫帚	sào zhǒu	broom
扫帚星	sào zhǒu xīng	comet

*Example:*

妈妈最近买了一把新扫帚。

Mā ma zuì jìn mǎi le yì bǎ xīn sào zhǒu

Mother bought a new broom recently.



# 妇 (婦)

FÙ wife; married woman

WOMAN (女) with broom (帚) is the symbol for wife or married woman: 婦, simplified to 妇 — woman (女) with helping hand (彡). Another character for wife is 妻 — woman (女) with broom (十) in hand (彡). Whatever the character, "She who is the wife of one man cannot eat the rice of two."



FENG

ㄥ 女 女 妇 妇 妇

少妇	shào fù	young married woman
夫妇	fū fù	husband and wife
妇产科	fù chǎn kē	(department of) gynaecology and obstetrics
妇女	fù nǚ	woman
妇人	fù rén	married woman
妇幼	fù yòu	women and children

*Example:*

这位少妇真勇敢，为了丈夫不惜牺牲一切。

Zhè wèi shào fù zhēn yǒng gǎn wéi le zhàng fū bù xī xī shēng yí qiè

She's a brave young woman. She sacrificed herself for the sake of her husband.

# 帝

dì

emperor

CREATING a symbol to suit the emperor can be a thorny problem. The ancient forms 𠂔 and 𠂔 represented him with long robes and designated by 一 (上, superior). Two arms were later added: 采. Then the bottom was changed to 采 (采, thorns) to produce 𠂔 and finally 帝. Hence the saying: "To attend on the emperor is like sleeping with a tiger."



FENG

、	一	采	采	采	帝					
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--

皇帝	huáng dì	emperor
上帝	shàng dì	God
帝国	dì guó	empire
帝国主义	dì guó zhǔ yì	imperialism
帝王	dì wáng	emperor; monarch
帝制	dì zhì	autocratic monarchy; monarchy

Example:

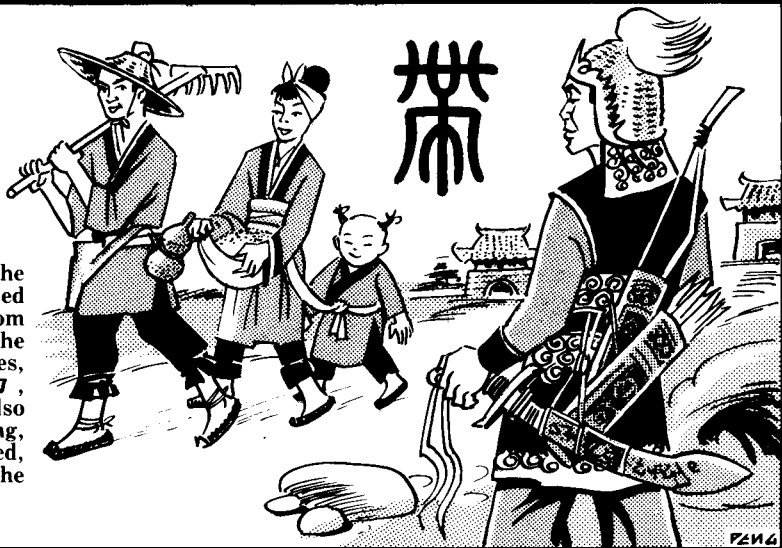
秦始皇是中国第一个皇帝。

Qín shì huáng shì Zhōng Guó dì yī ge huáng dì

Qinshihuang was the first emperor of China.

**带****(带)****DÀI** girdle; bring

**带** is a pictograph of the ancient girdle, embellished with trinkets hanging from it: **𠂔**. At the bottom of the character are the robes, represented by **巾** — two **巾**, one over the other. **带** also means to bring or take along, as articles are often carried, tucked in or worn at the girdle.



录音带	lù yīn dài	recording tape
热带	rè dài	the tropics
带累	dài lěi	implicate; involve
带领	dài lǐng	lead; guide
带路	dài lù	show the way; act as a guide
带头	dài tóu	take the lead; be the first

**Example:**

老师带领一群学生去爬山。

Lǎo shī dài lǐng yī qún xué shēng qù pá shān

The teacher led a group of students for a climb in the mountain.

# 帽

MÀO

hat;  
cap

THE phonetic 冒 means rash, acting with eyes (目) covered (冂). 冂 indicates a cover (冂) for something (一), viz., the head (一). 冒 combines with the radical 巾 (cloth) to produce 帽 (hat, cap). A cap does not always fit the head of the wearer because "many a good man can be found under a shabby hat."



丨	冂	巾	巾	巾	巾	巾	巾	帽	帽	帽	帽			
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--

安全帽

ān'chuán mào

safety helmet

帽徽

mào huī

insignia on a cap

帽子

mào zi

headgear; hat; cap; label; tag; brand

*Example:*

当上工地时，请记得带上安全帽。

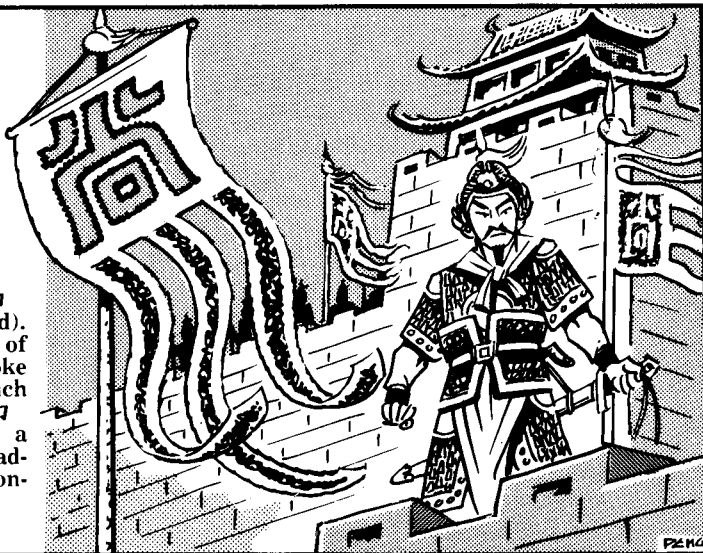
Dāng shàng gōng dì shí qǐng jì dé dài shàng ān quán mào

Please remember to put on the safety helmet when you are at the work site.

# 常

CHÁNG always; constantly

常 is made up of the radical 巾 (cloth) and phonetic 尚 (elevated). 尚 is a picture of the upper part of a house with a roof (宀), a smoke hole (口) and a ridge (亠) which divides (ノ) wind and rain. 巾 represents the banner raised as a signal in front of the general's headquarters 尚 and which flies constantly: 常.



常备军	cháng bèi jūn	standing army	常识	cháng shí	general or elementary knowledge
常常	cháng cháng	frequently; generally	常态	cháng tài	normal behaviour or conditions
常会	cháng huì	regular meeting	常务	cháng wù	day-to-day business; routine
常见	cháng jiàn	common	常言道	cháng yán dào	as the saying goes
常年	cháng nián	throughout the year; perennial	常用	cháng yòng	in common use
常人	cháng rén	man in the street	常驻	cháng zhù	resident; permanent

*Example:*

她常常去听音乐会。

Tā cháng cháng qu tīng yīn yuè huà

She goes to the concerts very often.

# 帮

# (幫)

BĀNG

help; assist

IN feudal times the emperor relied on the support of his nobles. The seal form of the character for such aid combines 帮 with 邦. 帮 denotes the crops (艹) and land (土) under the noble's rule (邦). 邦 signifies the silk or wealth donated.

In the modern form the phonetic 邦 means state or country represented by woods (木) and city (邑).



P2H4



帮忙	bāng máng	help; give a hand; do a favour
帮手	bāng shou	helper; assistant
帮凶	bāng xiōng	accomplice; accessory
帮助	bāng zhù	help; assist

Example:

我想把这箱水果搬到那里，你能帮我吗？

Wǒ xiǎng bǎ zhè xiāng shuǐ guǒ bān dào nà lǐ      nǐ néng bāng wǒ ma

Can you help me to carry the carton of fruits there?

衣

衤

yī clothes

衣 delineates the outlines of clothing: on the top, the outer garments with sleeves; at the bottom, the flowing robes. This pictograph serves as a radical for characters relating to clothing. Apparently, clothes do not make the man, according to the saying: "You can change the clothes; you cannot change the man."



FENG

、 一 衤 才 衣 衣

- |      |                  |  |
|------|------------------|--|
| 衣橱   | yī chú           | wardrobe   |
| 衣服   | yī fu            | clothing; clothes  |
| 衣冠楚楚 | yī guān chǔ chǔ  | be immaculately dressed  |
| 衣冠禽兽 | yī guān qín shòu | a beast in human attire; brute   |
| 衣架   | yī jià           | coat hanger; clothes-rack  |
| 衣食住行 | yī shí zhù xíng  | food, clothing, shelter and transportation — basic necessities of life |
| 衣鱼   | yī yú            | silverfish; fish moth; bookworm  |

Example:

这件衣服是新买的！

Zhè jiàn yī fu shì xīn mǎi de

This dress is newly bought!





# 被

**BÈI**bedclothes;  
blankets

被, bedclothes or blankets, are regarded as cloth (衣) skin (皮). The phonetic 皮 or 皮, represents the skin (皮) flayed by hand (手) with knife (刀). 被 may also mean to suffer, a sign of the passive. However, 袍 (literally, cloth 衣 wrap 包) refers to the long robe or outer garment wrapped round the body to keep it warm and active.



F2 H4

丶	一	才	才	衤	衤	衤	衤	衤	衤						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

被捕	bèi bǔ	be arrested; be under arrest
被单	bèi dān	(bed) sheet
被动	bèi dòng	passive
被俘	bèi fú	be captured; be taken prisoner
被告	bèi gào	defendant; the accused
被害人	bèi hài rén	the injured party; the victim
被迫	bèi pò	be compelled; be forced; be constrained
被褥	bèi rù	bedding; bedclothes

*Example:*

天气好冷，记得盖被。

Tiān qì hǎo lěng jì de gài bèi

It's cold. Remember to pull up your blanket.

# 表

**BIǎO**express;  
show;  
manifest

表 combining 衣 with 毛, means to show or make known. Clothes (衣) were originally skins with hair (毛) on the outside. 表 literally means the outside of clothes — the manifestation or outer appearance which may be a false front. It is said that when a boy is small you can see the man, but “A man cannot be known by his looks, nor can the sea be measured with a bushel basket.”



一	二	丰	丰	表	表	表								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

表层	biǎo céng	surface layer
表达	biǎo dá	express; convey; voice
表格	biǎo gé	form; table
表决	biǎo jué	decide by vote; vote
表露	biǎo lù	show; reveal
表面	biǎo miàn	surface; face; outside; appearance

表明	biǎo míng	make known; make clear
表亲	biǎo qīn	cousin; cousinship
表情	biǎo qíng	express one's feelings; expression
表示	biǎo shì	show; express; indicate
表现	biǎo xiàn	manifestation; display; manifest

*Example:*

对这问题他没有表明立场。

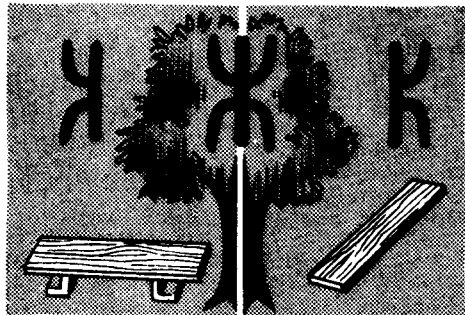
Duì zhè wèn tí tā méi yǒu biǎo míng lì chǎng

He did not express his stand on this matter.

# 片

Man cannot wait to saw a tree (木) vertically into two halves: 片 and 片. 片 serves as a strong plank for his bed and 片 as a symbol for a slice or piece. With 片 and 片 he forms a tripod for an urn: 鼎. He uses 木 and its components 片 and 片 as radicals. And so the saying goes: "He plants a tree in the morning and wants to saw planks from it in the evening."

PIÀN slice; piece



丩	丩	片	片																
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

片段	piàn duàn	part; passage; extract; fragment
片刻	piàn kè	a short while; an instant; a moment
片时	piàn shí	a short while; a moment
片瓦无存	piàn wǎ wú cún	not a single tile remains — be razed to the ground
片言	piàn yán	a few words; a phrase or two
片子	piàn zi	flat, thin piece; slice; flake; scrap

*Example:*

他在这里逗留了片刻。

Tā zài zhè lǐ dòu liú le piàn kè

He was here for a short while.

# 床 (牀)

舛, the left half of a tree (木), represents a thick, strong plank used for a bed. By adding 木 to 舛 you can make 牀 (bed) — literally, strong plank (舛) of wood (木). Another way is by placing 木 (wood) under 宀 (roof): 床. As you make your bed, you must lie on it, so “if you can’t sleep, don’t complain about your bed.”

CHUÁNG bed



PHONG

丶	宀	广	宀	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床	床
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

单人床	dān rén chuáng	single bed
双人床	shuāng rén chuáng	double bed
床单	chuáng dān	bedsheet
床垫	chuáng diàn	mattress
床位	chuáng wèi	berth; bunk; bed
床罩	chuáng zhào	bedspread

*Example:*

他卧病在床。

Tā wò bìng zài chuáng

He is sick in bed.

# 墙 (牆)

QIÁNG wall

THE seal form of the phonetic 審 signifies grain (𥝌) stored within (入) a double-walled granary (囷). The idea of wall is reinforced by the radical 阝, a symbol of strength. Since walls are made of clay or earth (土), the character may also be written: 墻. Walls may fortify a city, but "men, not walls, make a city."



一 十 土 廾 卅 卌 卍 垚 垚 垚 垚 垚 垚 垚 垚

- |    |            |                                |
|----|------------|--------------------------------|
| 墙壁 | qiáng bì   | wall                           |
| 墙角 | qiáng jiǎo | a corner formed by two walls   |
| 墙脚 | qiáng jiǎo | the foot of a wall; foundation |

### Example

墙壁上有一个大洞。

Qiáng bì shàng yǒu yī ge dà dòng

There is a big hole on the wall.

# 将

# (將)

将 has many seal forms and varied meanings:

is a meatblock (𠂇) with meat (肉).

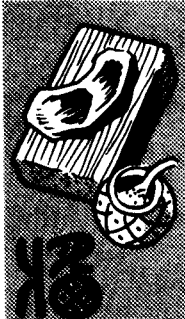
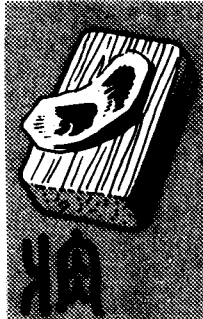
shows the meatblock (𠂇) with meat (𠂇) and salt (𠂇).

represents the meatblock (𠂇) with meat (𠂇) and brine (𠂇).

将

signifies the hand (爿) placing meat (𠂇) upon the block (𠂇).

**JIANG** take; hold; handle; shall; will



Hence the extended meanings: offer, present; nourish, help; take, hold; handle, manage. 将 is a character with a future, often used for shall or will; it is even used to mean leader or general.

PSM4



将错就错	jiāng cuò jiù cuò	leave a mistake uncorrected and make the best of it
将计就计	jiāng jì jiù jì	turn somebody's trick against him; beat somebody at his own game
将近	jiāng jìn	close to; nearly; almost
将军	jiāng jūn	general
将来	jiāng lái	future

*Example:*

我将请他来我家。

Wǒ jiāng qǐng tā lái wǒ jiā

I am inviting him over to my house.

壮 (壯)

ZHUÀNG  
strong;  
eminent;  
impressive

壮 literally means a strong and impressive (男) person-age (士) or one who professes to be so; by extension, strong and able-bodied.

An analogous character is 妆 (adorn, disguise) — an impressive (男) woman (女), i.e., one who adorns herself with make-up.



FAMG



壮胆	zhuàng dǎn	embolden; boost somebody's courage
壮丽	zhuàng lì	majestic; magnificent; glorious
壮烈	zhuàng liè	heroic; brave
壮士	zhuàng shì	hero; warrior
壮实	zhuàng shí	sturdy; robust
壮志	zhuàng zhì	great aspiration; lofty ideal

*Example:*

他 为 国 壮 烈 牺 牲 。

Tā wèi guó zhuàng liè xī shēng

He sacrificed heroically for his country.

# 装 (装)

ZHUĀNG pack; fill; pretend

壯, the phonetic, means strong or robust. It was originally applied to an official distinguished by his robe of office, and therefore has to do with appearance. The addition of the radical 衣 (clothing) suggests putting oneself into another's clothing and filling it — to deceive; by extension, to pack, fill, pretend: 装.



PM16



装扮	zhuāng bǎn	dress up; disguise
装备	zhuāng bèi	equip; equipment; outfit
装糊涂	zhuāng hū tu	pretend not to know
装货	zhuāng huò	loading (cargo)
装甲车	zhuāng jiǎ chē	armoured car
装模作样	zhuāng mú zuò yàng	be affected; put on an act
装配	zhuāng pèi	assemble; fit together

装腔	zhuāng qiāng	behave affectedly; be artificial
装饰	zhuāng shì	decorate; adorn; ornament; deck
装束	zhuāng shù	dress; attire
装修	zhuāng xiū	fit up (a house, etc.)
装置	zhuāng zhì	install; fit; installation

Example:

她装老大娘真象。

Tā zhuāng Lǎo dà niáng zhēn xiàng

She acted like an old lady.



夕

xī  
evening

夕 is a picture of the crescent moon emerging on the horizon at dusk, its lower part obstructed by a mountain. Hence the extended meaning: dusk, evening. To man, the rising moon presents opportunities but the proverb laments: "How seldom in life is the moon directly overhead!"



P2614

夕

一朝一夕	yī zhāo yī xī	overnight
夕烟	xī yān	evening mist
夕阳	xī yáng	the setting sun
夕照	xī zhào	the glow of the setting sun; evening glow

*Example:*

这些问题不是一朝一夕能够解决的。

Zhè xiè wèn tí bú shì yī zhāo yī xī néng gòu jiě jué de

These problems cannot be solved overnight.

# 多

**DUŌ** From morning to evening man toiled in the field, and evening (夕) after evening (夕) he noted the fruitage of his labour. "Many evenings" (多) soon came to mean "many". His hard work bore much (多) fruit (果), producing many; a new word: 果多 (fruitful) and demonstrating the principle: "Sow much, reap much; sow little, reap little."



PENG

夕 夕 夕 夕 夕 夕

多半	duō bàn	the greater part; most
多才多艺	duō cái duō yì	versatile; gifted in many ways
多此一举	duō cǐ yì jǔ	make an unnecessary move
多方面	duō fāng miàn	many-sided; in many ways
多国公司	duō guó gōng sī	multinational corporation
多民族	duō mín zú	
国家	guó jiā	multinational country

多少	duō shǎo	amount; somewhat; how many
多时	duō shí	a long time
多谢	duō xiè	thanks a lot
多心	duō xīn	oversensitive; suspicious
多余	duō yú	unnecessary; superfluous
多嘴	duō zuǐ	speak out of turn

### Example:

你的担心是多余的。

Ni de dān xīn shì duō yú de

Your worries are unnecessary.

# 夠

GÒU  
enough

句 is to hook (丿) with the mouth (口): to entice; 多 means much, many. 夠 therefore signifies to entice many, i.e., enough. But enough is not always enough, according to the proverb: "To complete a thing, a hundred years is not sufficient; to destroy it, a day is more than enough."

# 弱



丿 ㄅ 夕 夕 夕 夕 夕 夕 夠 夠 夠 夠

- |     |              |   |
|-----|--------------|---|
| 够本  | gòu běn      | break even  |
| 够朋友 | gòu péng you | be a friend indeed                                |
| 够受的 | gòu shòu de  | quite an ordeal                                   |
| 够意思 | gòu yì si    | really something; terrific; generous; really kind |

Example:

这场球赛可真够意思。

Zhè chǎng qiú sài kě zhēn gòu yì si

That was really a terrific game.

爹

DIĒ

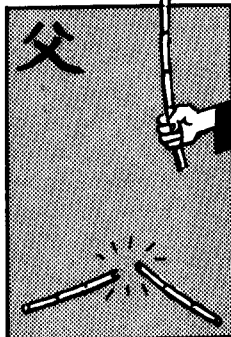
It takes three desperate characters to represent father:

父 is raised hand (又) wielding a rod (丨).

爹 incorporates 多 — much raising of hand with rod.

father; 爸 includes 巴 — poised like a snake, ready to strike.

daddy All of them exemplify the saying, "It is easier to rule a nation than a son."



FAH6



爸爸	bà ba	papa; dad; father
爹爹	diē die	father; dad; papa
爹娘	diē niáng	parents
父老	fù lǎo	elders (of a country or district)
父母	fù mǔ	father and mother; parents
父亲	fù qīn	father
父亲亲属	fù xì qīn shǔ	relatives on the paternal side

Example:

父亲节那天，我送爸爸一份礼物。

Fù qīn jié nà tiān wǒ sòng bà ba yí fèn lǐ wù

On Father's Day, I gave my father a present.

外

WÀI  
outside

外 is composed of 夕 (evening) and 卜 (divine). Divination (卜), by interpreting the vertical (丨) and horizontal (一) cracks of a heated tortoise-shell, was deemed effective only before (or outside of) evening. Hence the meaning: outside or foreign. And for such outside or foreign help, many will pay handsomely — those who place trust in the saying: “Much money moves the gods.”

外



ノ 夕 外 外

外币	wài bì	foreign currency
外边	wài bian	outside; out
外表	wài biǎo	outward appearance; exterior
外宾	wài bīn	foreign guest
外公	wài gōng	(maternal) grandfather
外国	wài guó	foreign country
外行	wài háng	layman; nonprofessional
外籍	wài jí	foreign nationality

外交	wài jiāo	diplomacy; foreign affairs
外快	wài kuài	extra income
外贸	wài mào	foreign trade
外貌	wài mào	appearance; looks
外人	wài rén	stranger; outsider
外孙	wài sūn	daughter's son; grandson
外套	wài tào	overcoat

Example:

我对音乐很外行。

Wǒ duì yīn yuè hěn wài háng

I am a layman in music.

梦

(夢)

MÈNG

dream

The seal forms of dream are horrifying enough to evoke a nightmare. No wonder the original character; 瞞 means bad sight (首) with covered (冂) eyes (目). Dreams being evening visions, 夕 replaces 目 in the new form: 夢, now simplified to 梦 (evening trees) — a pleasant dream. Unfortunately, “a beautiful dream is soon ended.”



PEW4

一	十	才	木	木	木	材	材	林	梦	梦	梦						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

梦话	mèng huà	words uttered in one's sleep; somniloquy
梦幻	mèng huàn	illusion; dream; reverie
梦境	mèng jìng	dreamland; dreamworld; dream
梦想	mèng xiǎng	dream of; vainly hope
梦游症	mèng yóu zhèng	somnambulism; sleepwalking

Example:

昨晚我听见你说梦话。

Zuó wǎn wǒ tīng jiàn nǐ shuō mèng huà

I heard you talk in your sleep last night.

# 夜

YÈ

night

The seal character 夜 depicts man (大) sleeping on his side (丿) in the evening (夕). The modern form 夜 shows man (亻) under cover (宀) lying on his other side (㇇) also in the evening (夕). If night can be suggested by sleep, as in both these forms, then day can be transformed into night, as demonstrated by our sleepy characters shown here.



7616

、 宀 夕 亻 宀 夕 夜 夜 夜

开夜车	kāi yè chē	work deep into the night; burn the midnight oil
夜班	yè bān	night shift
夜半	yè bàn	midnight
夜长梦多	yè cháng mèng duō	a long night is fraught with dreams – a long delay means many hitches
夜工	yè gōng	night job
夜盲	yè máng	night blindness
夜勤	yè qín	night duty
夜晚	yè wǎn	night
夜以继日	yè yǐ jì rì	day and night; round the clock

**Example:**

工程正在夜以继日地进行。

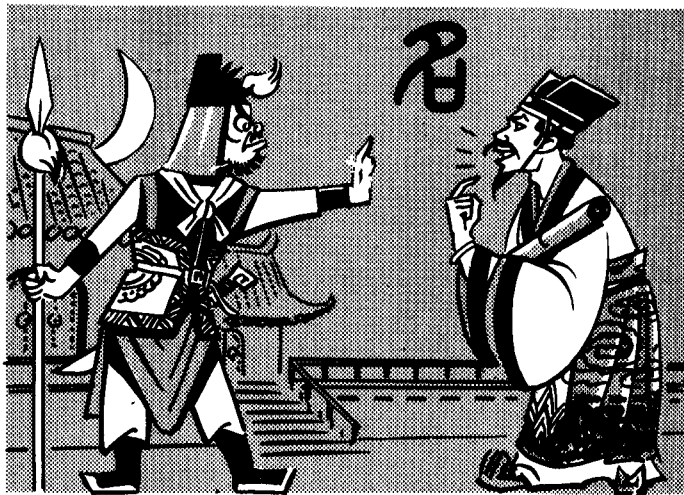
Gōng chéng zhèng zài yè yǐ jì rì de jìn xíng

Work is going on day and night at the construction site.

# 名

MÍNG name; fame

In the dusk (夕), man is not clearly discernible, so he identifies himself, announcing by word of mouth (口) his name: 名. And if he has a good name and reputation, he has nothing to fear. Let him draw courage from the saying: "Travelling or at home, the gentleman does not change his name."



PE-116

ノ 夕 夕 夕 名 名

名不虚传	míng bù xū chuán	live up to one's reputation
名册	míng cè	register
名产	míng chǎn	famous product
名称	míng chēng	name (of a thing or organization)
名单	míng dān	name list
名贵	míng guì	famous and precious; rare

名教	míng jiào	the Confucian ethical code
名流	míng liú	distinguished personages
名牌	míng pái	famous brand
名片	míng piàn	visiting card; calling card
名声	míng shēng	reputation; repute; renown
名胜	míng shèng	a place famous for its scenery or historical relics

*Example:*

他用的是一辆名牌的车子。

Tā yòng de shì yì liàng míng pái de chē zi

The car he is using is of a famous brand.



# 铭 (銘)

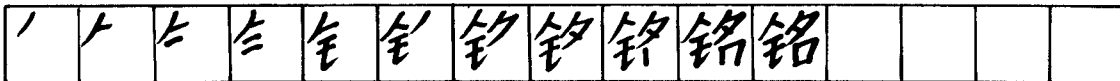
MÍNG

inscribe;  
engrave

Name (名) on metal or gold (金) means to carve, inscribe or engrave: 金名. Because a good name is worth more than gold, it is durable, unlike the rotten one referred to in the proverb: "Decayed wood cannot be carved."



PENG



铭诸肺腑	míng zhū fèi fǔ	engrave on one's mind (memory); bear firmly in mind
铭感	míng gǎn	be deeply grateful
铭记	míng jì	engrave on one's mind; always remember
铭刻	míng kè	inscription; always remember
铭文	míng wén	inscription; epigraph

### Example:

他把母亲的教诲铭诸肺腑

Tā bǎ mǔ qīn de jiāo huì míng zhū fèi fǔ

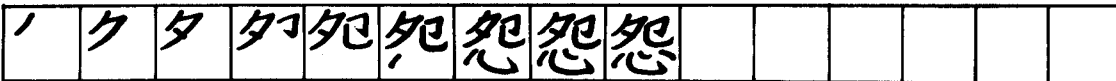
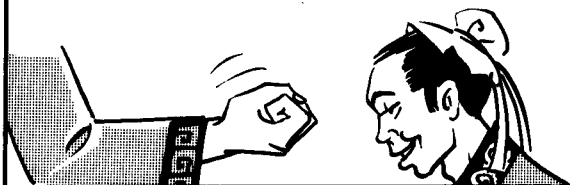
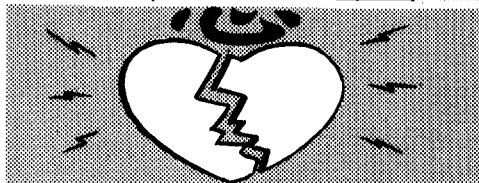
He bore his mother's teachings firmly in mind.

# 怨

## YUÀN

hatred;  
resentment

This character is based on 心 (heart), the seat of feelings. The phonetic indicates a turning away (ㄉ) from someone hateful, acting as if it were night (夕) and calling it a day. If such hatred or resentment leads to violence, remember the counsel: "An angry fist cannot strike a smiling face."



怨不得	yuàn bu de	cannot blame
怨愤	yuàn fèn	discontent and indignation
怨恨	yuàn hèn	have a grudge against somebody; hate; resentment
怨气	yuàn qì	grievance; complaint; resentment
怨天尤人	yuàn tiān yóu rén	blame god and man – blame everyone and everything but oneself
怨言	yuàn yán	complaint; grumble

*Example:*

巴士坏了，怨不得他们迟到。

Bá shì huài le yuàn bu de tā men chí dào

The bus broke down. No wonder they were late.

# 从 (從)

CÓNG follow; from

從 represents two men (从) walking (彳) and stopping (止). In the seal form, 彳 and 止 are united into 𠂔 (going). The simplified form is 从 — a man following another man — a simple task, in view of the saying: "To know the truth is easy; but, ah, how difficult it is to follow it!"



PEWU

ノ	人	从	从										
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

从容	cōng róng	calm; unhurried; leisurely
从此	cóng cǐ	from this time on; henceforth
从简	cóng jiǎn	conform to the principle of simplicity
从军	cóng jūn	join the army; enlist
从来	cóng lái	always; at all times; all along
从前	cóng qián	before; formerly; in the past

从事	cóng shì	go in for; be engaged in
从属	cóng shǔ	subordinate
从速	cóng sù	as soon as possible
从头	cóng tóu	from the beginning; anew
从小	cóng xiǎo	from childhood; as a child
从中	cóng zhōng	out of; from among

*Example:*

我从来没有见过他。

Wǒ cóng lái méi yǒu jiàn guo tā

I have never seen him before.

# 行

XÍNG walk; go

HÁNG shop; trade

Originally this was a pictograph of a cross-road: 𠂇. Now it is a radical which combines one step with the left foot (彳) and one step with the right (亍) to suggest walk, go or travel: 行. Since business thrives at cross-roads, 行 can apply to shop, trade or business, on the basis of the saying: "If a little money does not go out, great money will not come in."

𠂇  
彳  
亍  
行  
行



丿 勹 彳 亍 行 行

行家	háng jia	expert
行列	háng liè	ranks
行情	háng qíng	quotations (on the market); prices
行业	háng yè	trade; profession; industry
行长	háng zhǎng	president (of a bank)
行不通	xíng bu tōng	won't do or work; get nowhere
行人	xíng rén	pedestrian
行政	xíng zhèng	administration

*Example:*

请问你是从事什么行业的？

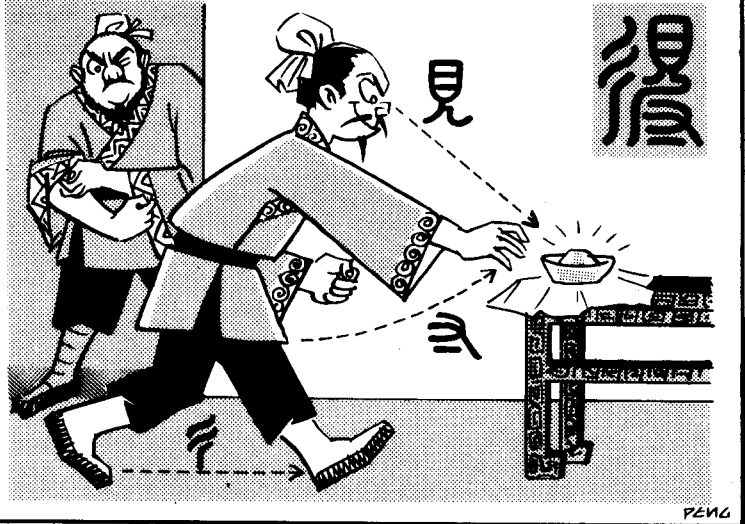
Qǐng wèn nǐ shì cóng shì shén me háng yè de

May I know your profession?

# 得

DÉ get; obtain

彳, the radical, means step. The phonetic 得 — to lay hands (寸) on what one has in view (見 or 豆) — signifies to obtain. However, laying hands on money is not easy: "Money comes like earth picked up with a pin, but goes like sand washed away by water."



PEWU



- |      |                |   |
|------|----------------|---|
| 得寸进尺 | dé cùn jìn chǐ | give him an inch and he'll take an ell; be insatiable |
| 得到   | dé dào         | get; obtain; gain; receive                            |
| 得分   | dé fēn         | score   |
| 得奖   | dé jiǎng       | win or be awarded a prize                             |
| 得胜   | dé shèng       | win a victory; triumph                                |
| 得失   | dé shī         | gain and loss; success and failure                    |

- |    |        |                                 |
|----|--------|---------------------------------|
| 得势 | dé shì | be in power; get the upper hand |
| 得悉 | dé xī  | hear of; learn about            |
| 得益 | dé yì  | benefit; profit                 |
| 得志 | dé zhì | achieve one's ambition          |
| 得罪 | dé zuì | offend; displease               |

*Example:*

两种办法各有得失。

Liǎng zhǒng bàn fǎ gè yǒu dé shī

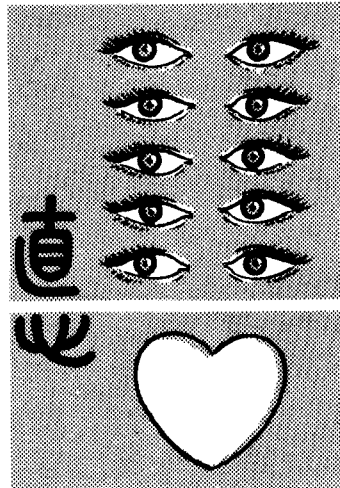
Each of the two methods has its advantages and disadvantages.

# 德

DÉ

virtue; goodness

直 means straight (一) as tested by ten (十) eyes (目). 心 is the heart. So the phonetic 志 denotes a straight heart. Clarified by the radical for step (彳) to mean the way to virtue or goodness, 德 is defined by the saying: "To talk good is not being good; to do good, that is being good."



PEM4

丿 勹 彳 行 行 行 行 行 行 行 德 德 德 德 德

德高望重	dé gāo wàng zhòng	be of noble character and high prestige
德国	Dé Guó	Germany
德行	dé xíng	moral integrity; moral conduct
德育	dé yù	moral education
品德	pǐn dé	moral character

*Example:*

政府现在正在积极推行德育。

Zhèng fǔ xiàn zài zhèng zài jī jí tuī xíng dé yù

The government is at present actively promoting moral education.

# 徒

TÚ

follower;  
go on foot

The seal form of 走 is 走 — a man bending forward (大) to go on foot, (止) i.e., walk. The seal form of 徒, however, is 徒 — one who goes (走) on the ground, (土) i.e., a disciple who walks in the footsteps of his master, like the shadow following the substance.



FENG

丿	勹	彳	彳	彳	徒	徒	徒	徒						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

徒步	tú bù	on foot
徒弟	tú di	apprentice; disciple
徒工	tú gōng	apprentice
徒劳	tú láo	futile effort; fruitless labour

*Example:*

他已尽了力，到最后还是徒劳无功。

Tā yǐ jìn le lì dào zuì hòu hái shì tú láo wú gōng

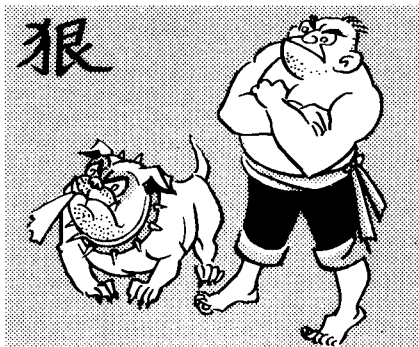
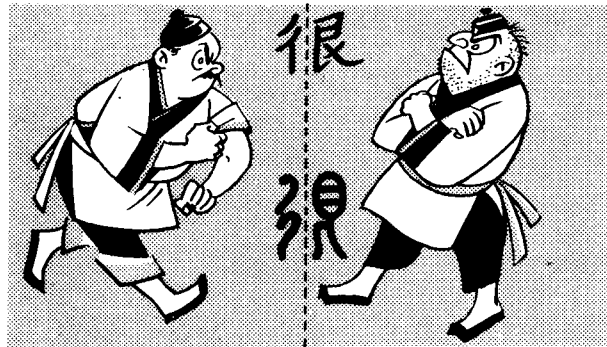
He has tried his best but to no avail.

# 很

HÈN

very;  
quite

The phonetic 艮 (originally 𠂔) means stubborn – to turn around (匕) and eye (目) another defiantly. The radical 彳 (step) suggests the steps needed to curb this stubbornness; hence intensive, very. An analogous character is 狠 – obstinate (艮) and beastly (犭).



PENG

丿	㇇	彳	彳	彳	很	很	很						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

好得很

hǎo de hěn

very good

很有道理

hěn yǒu dào lǐ

contain much truth; be quite correct

*Example:*

他的上司对他的工作表现感到很满意。

Tā de shàng sī duì tā de gōng zuò biǎo xiàn gǎn dào hěn mǎn yì

His boss is very pleased with his work performance.



# 街

JIE

road;  
street

行, the radical, represents footprints; it means to go, walk or travel. The phonetic 圭 (soil 土 doubled) suggests road, street or ground for walking. Travelling on a road can be trying, hence: "Long roads test the horse; long dealings test the friend."



'	丿	彳	行	往	往	往	往	街		
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--

街道	jiē dào	street; residential district; neighbourhood
街坊	jiē fang	neighbour
街市	jiē shì	downtown streets
街头	jiē tóu	street corner; street
街头巷尾	jiē tóu xiàng wěi	streets and lanes

*Example:*

街头巷尾，到处都是欢乐的人群。

Jiē tóu xiàng wěi dào chù dōu shì huān lè de rén qún

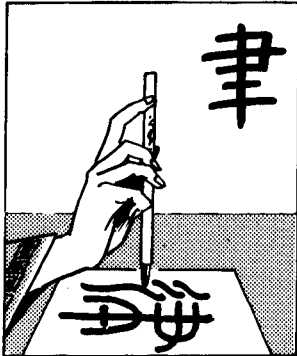
There are happy crowds in all the streets and lanes.

# 律

Lǚ

law; rule  
discipline

The phonetic 聿 signifies written regulations — hand (手) with pen (聿) writing lines (一) on tablet (一). The radical 彳 (step) suggests steps taken to enforce them as law to protect the citizens. However, “Going to the law is losing a cow for the sake of a cat.”



'	彳	彳	彳	律	律	律						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

律吕  
 律师  
 律诗

lǚ lǚ  
 lǚ shī  
 lǚ shī

bamboo pitch-pipes used in ancient China; temperament  
 lawyer; barrister; solicitor  
 a poem of eight lines, each containing five or seven characters,  
 with a strict tonal pattern and rhyme scheme

*Example:*

辩方律师为被告辩护。

Biàn fāng lǚ shī wéi bèi gào biàn hù

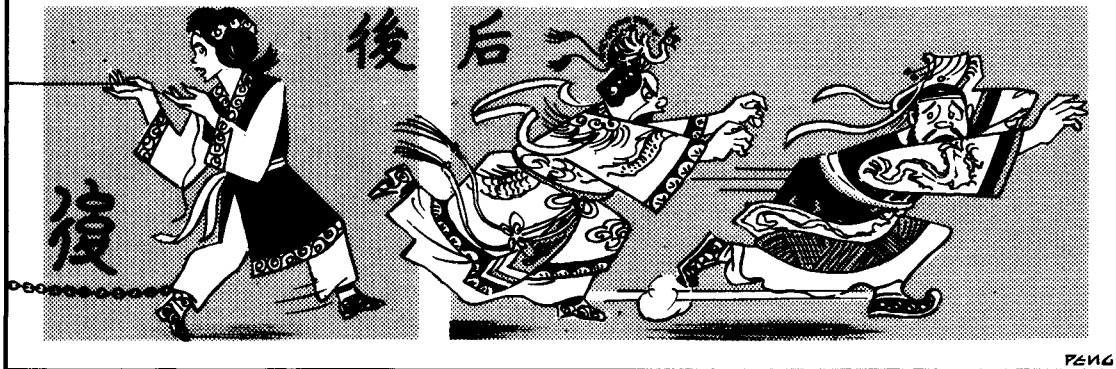
The lawyer speaks in defence of the accused.

HOU

after; behind

后 (後)

This character combines three signs: 彳 (step with left foot), 幺 (the finest thread, least or last) and 攴 (hindered at the feet from behind). All three factors contribute to the sense: behind, after or future. 後 is now simplified to 后 (empress) probably because the queen goes after the king.



后半	hòu bàn	latter half; second half
后备军	hòu bèi jūn	reserves; reserve force
后辈	hòu bèi	younger generation; posterity
后代	hòu dài	later periods (in history)
后方	hòu fāng	rear
后跟	hòu gēn	heel (of a shoe or sock)
后果	hòu guǒ	consequence; aftermath

后患	hòu huàn	future trouble
后悔	hòu huǐ	regret; repent
后会 有期	hòu huì yǒu qī	we'll meet again some day
后景	hòu jǐng	background
后来	hòu lái	afterwards; later
后天	hòu tiān	day after tomorrow; postnatal; acquired

Example:

知识是后天获得的，不是先天就有的。

Zhī shì shì hòu tiān huò dé de , bù shì xiān tiān jiù yǒu de

Knowledge is acquired, not innate.

# 待

DÀI

treat; deal with

寺 is a court where the law or rule (寸) is applied continually, like the growth of a plant (艹). The radical 彳 indicates the step or way to treat others with propriety, requiring patience and application of the golden rule: "Do to others as you would have them do to you."



FLVIG

丶 丿 彳 行 往 待 待

待命

dài mìng

await orders

待人接物

dài rén jiē wù

the way one gets along with people

待续

dài xù

to be continued

待遇

dài yù

treatment; remuneration

*Example:*

这间公司对职员很照顾，给的待遇也很好。

Zhè jiān gōng sī duì zhí yuán hěn zhào gu      gěi de dài yù yě hěn hào

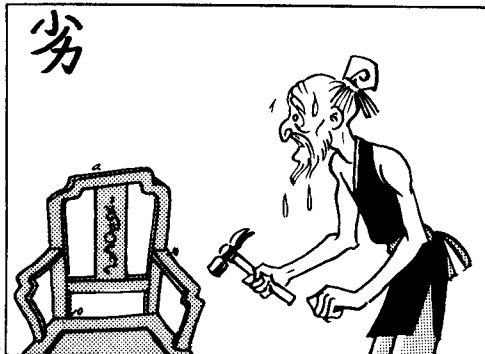
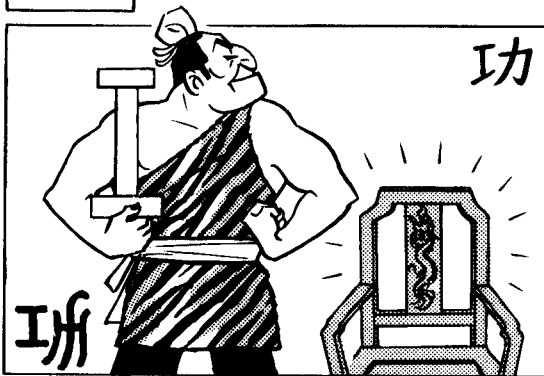
This company treats its employees well, and also offers attractive remuneration.

# 功

GŌNG

merit;  
achievement

Strength (力) is here symbolized by muscles, and work (工) by a carpenter's square. Strength exerted in work produces 功 — merit or achievement. On the other hand, little (少) strength (力) results in 劣, meaning bad or inferior.



PENG

一	工	功	巧	功															
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

- |      |                     |   |
|------|---------------------|---|
| 功败垂成 | gōng bài chuí chéng | fail in a great undertaking on the verge of success |
| 功德   | gōng dé             | merits and virtues                                  |
| 功课   | gōng kè             | schoolwork; homework                                |
| 功亏一篑 | gōng kuī yī kuì     | fall short of success for lack of a final effort    |
| 功劳   | gōng lao            | contribution; meritorious service; credit           |
| 功能   | gōng néng           | function  |
| 功效   | gōng xiào           | efficacy; effect                                    |

Example:

她的功劳可不小啊！

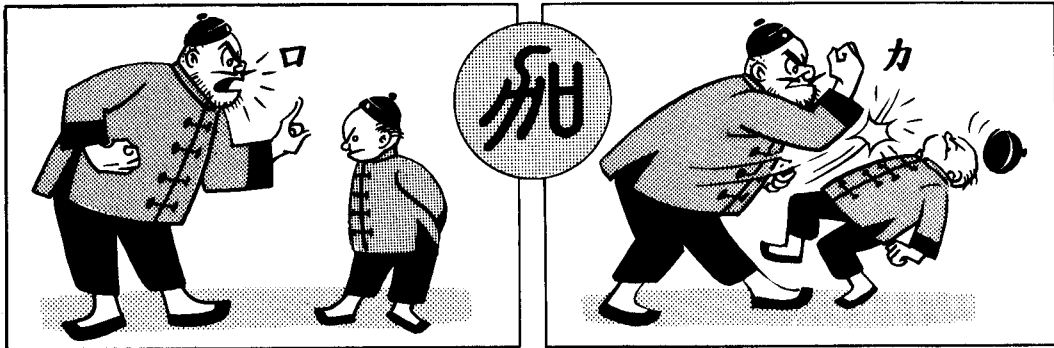
Tā de gōng lao kě bù xiǎo ā

She has certainly made no small contribution!

# 加

**JIA**add;  
increase

This ideograph means to add to or increase. It adds strength (力) to mouth (口) by applying force to words. Adding violence to persuasion cannot always be justified. Although might is never right, right is always might.



FENG

丁	力	加	加																
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

加班	jiā bān	work overtime
加倍	jiā bèi	double; redouble
加法	jiā fā	addition
加害	jiā hài	injure; do harm to
加紧	jiā jǐn	step up; speed up; intensify
加宽	jiā kuān	broaden; widen
加仑	jiā lún	gallon

加冕	jiā miǎn	coronation
加强	jiā qiáng	strengthen; enhance
加入	jiā rù	add; mix; join; accede to
加速	jiā sù	accelerate; expedite
加意	jiā yì	with special care; with close attention
加油	jiā yóu	refuel; make an extra effort

**Example:**

观众为运动员们加油。

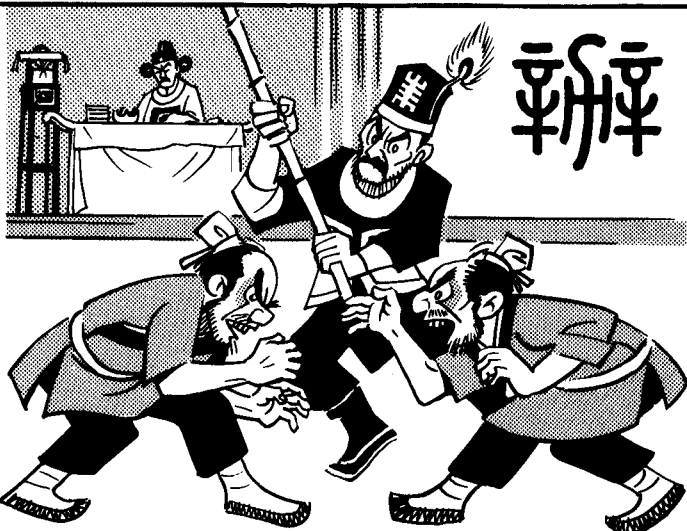
Guān zhòng wèi yùn dòng yuán men jiā yóu

The spectators cheered the players on.

# 办 (辦)

BÀN handle; manage

办 is one who has offended (办) a superior (上 or 上). 办办 means to handle or manage; literally, to interpose force (力) between two offenders (办办). Such man-handling often leads to injury. Better to heed the proverb: "Just scales and full measure injure no man."



PENGL

了 力 办 办

办案	bàn àn	handle a case
办到	bàn dào	get something done; accomplish
办法	bàn fǎ	way; means; measure
办公	bàn gōng	handle official business; work (usually in an office)
办理	bàn lǐ	handle; conduct; transact
办事	bàn shì	handle affairs; work
办罪	bàn zuì	punish

### Example:

这些事情你可以斟酌办理。

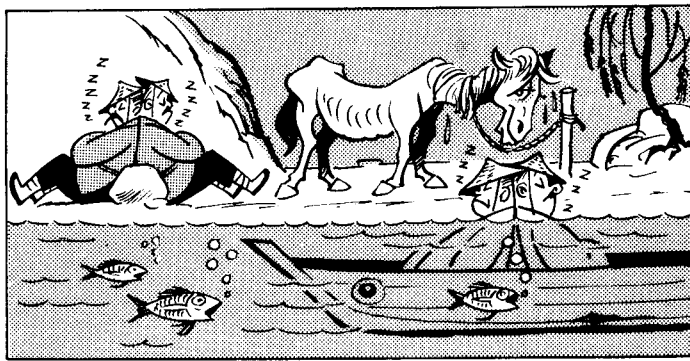
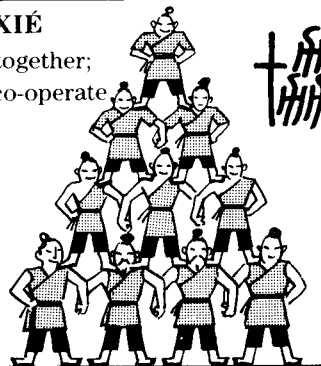
Zhè xiē shì qing nǐ kě yǐ zhēn zhuó bàn lǐ

You may handle these matters as you see fit.

# 协 (協)

Triple-strength (𠄎), signifying the multiple efforts of ten (+) persons in unity, indicates wholehearted cooperation: 十人一心. Without cooperation, shared responsibility leads to neglect. "If two men feed a horse, it will be thin, if two men mend a boat, it will leak."

XIÉ  
together;  
co-operate



PE14

一 十 十 十 十 十 十 十 十 十 十 十

协定 xié dìng agreement; accord  
 协会 xié huì association; society  
 协力 xié lì unite efforts; join in a common effort  
 协商 xié shāng consult; talk things over  
 协调 xié tiáo coordinate; concert; harmonize

协同 xié tóng work in coordination with; cooperate with  
 协议 xié yì agree on; agreement  
 协助 xié zhù assist; help; give assistance  
 协奏曲 xié zòu qǔ concerto  
 协作 xié zuò cooperation; coordination; combined

*Example:*

体操运动员的动作协调优美。

Tì cāo yùn dòng yuán de dòng zuò xié tiáo yōu měi

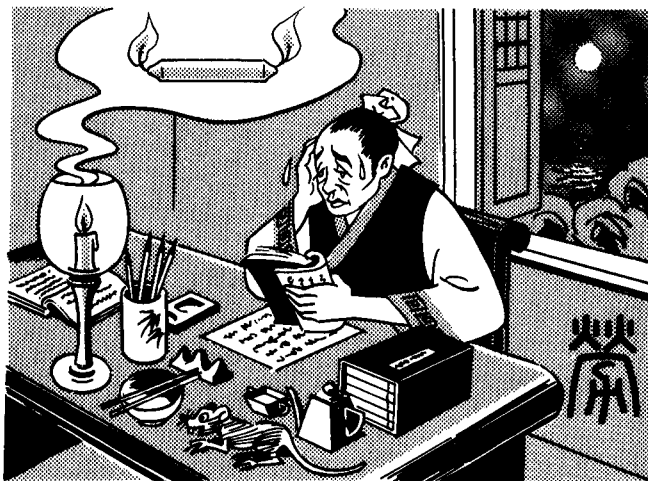
The gymnast's movements are harmonious and graceful.



# 劳 (勞)

LÁO work; labour

勞 is to toil (力) indoors (宀) by the light of many fires (火火). Burning the midnight oil or the candle at both ends is a waste of effort. "It is labour lost, trying to catch the moon in the water or polishing brick to make a mirror."



FZ116

一 十 廿 卅 卌 卍 劳 勞

劳动	láo dòng	work; labour
劳而无功	láo ér wú gōng	work hard but to no avail
劳工	láo gōng	labourer; worker
劳累	láo lèi	tired; run-down
劳力	láo lì	labour; labour force
劳碌	láo lù	work hard; toil

劳神	láo shén	be a tax on (one's mind); bother; trouble
劳心	láo xīn	work with one's mind or brains
劳燕分飞	láo yàn fēn fēi	part; separate
劳资	láo zī	labour and capital

**Example:**

你现在身体不好，不要过于劳神。

Ni xiàn zài shēn tǐ bù hǎo      bù yào guò yú láo shén

You're in poor health; so don't overtax yourself.



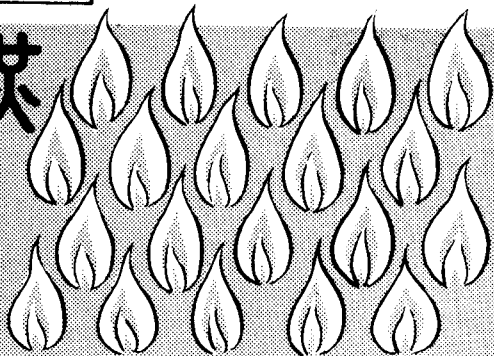
# 光

GUĀNG

light;  
glory

The ancient form 𠄎 means twenty (廿) fires (火). The modern form 𠄎 portrays a man (儿) bearing a torch (火). Whatever the form, 光 means brightness and glory which, unfortunately, never lasts. Hence: "A bright dawn does not always make a fine day."

# 𠄎



PEYI.G

丨 丩 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 光

光彩	guāng cǎi	lustre; splendour; radiance; honourable; glorious
光辐射	guāng fú shè	ray radiation
光顾	guāng gù	patronize
光棍儿	guāng gūn er	unmarried man; bachelor
光辉	guāng huī	radiance; brilliance

光景	guāng jǐng	scene; circumstances
光芒万丈	guāng máng wàn zhàng	shining with boundless radiance
光明	guāng míng	light; bright; promising
光荣	guāng róng	honour; glory; credit
光天化日	guāng tiān huà rì	broad daylight

**Example:**

光彩绚丽的贝雕吸引了许多观众。

Guāng cǎi xuàn lì de bèi diāo xī yǐn le xǔ duō guān zhòng

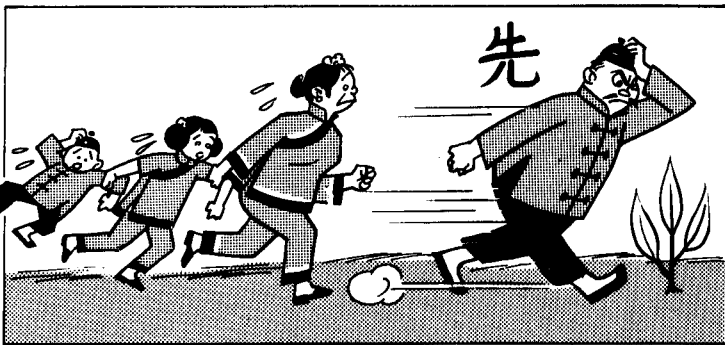
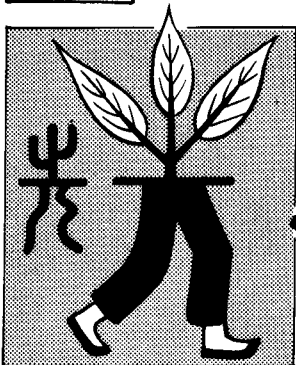
The brilliant lustre of the shell attracted many visitors.

# 先

XIĀN

first;  
before

The top part 生 is a small plant (艹) issuing from the ground (一); thus indicating progress. The lower part is a picture of marching legs. Accordingly, 先 means to advance (生) on one's feet (儿) — to be first. And to progress with people, remember: "Courtesy first, force later" (先礼后兵).



PEI16

丿	一	艹	生	先															
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

先辈	xiān bèi	elder generation; ancestors
先导	xiān dǎo	guide; forerunner
先后	xiān hòu	early or late; priority; one after another
先进	xiān jìn	advanced
先来后到	xiān lái hòu dào	first come, first served
先生	xiān sheng	teacher; mister
先下手为强	xiān xià shǒu wéi qiáng	he who strikes first gains the advantage
先知	xiān zhī	person of foresight; prophet

*Example:*

这些事都该办；可也得有个先后。

Zhè xiē shì dōu gāi bàn kě yě déi yǒu gè xiān hòu

All these matters should be tackled, but they should be taken up in order of priority.

# 洗

Xǐ wash; clean

The radical is 氵 (water) and the phonetic 先 (first). This suggests that you must have water (氵) first (先) to wash or clean: 洗. And what needs to be cleansed first? According to the proverbial exhortation: "Cleanse your heart as you would cleanse a dish."



PEM4



洗尘	xǐ chén	give a dinner of welcome (to a visitor from afar)
洗涤	xǐ dí	wash; cleanse
洗发剂	xǐ fà jì	shampoo
洗劫	xǐ jié	loot; sack
洗刷	xǐ shuā	wash and brush; scrub
洗心革面	xǐ xīn gé miàn	turn over a new leaf
洗印	xǐ yìn	developing and printing; processing
洗澡	xǐ zǎo	have a bath; bathe

*Example:*

新年到了，大家忙着洗刷屋子和房间。

Xīn nián dào le dà jiā máng zhe xǐ shuā wū zi hé fáng jiān

Everybody is busy washing and cleaning the house in preparation for the coming new year.

# 波

BŌ

waves;  
ripples

The saying goes: "When there is wind in the clouds, there are waves on the river." Such waves (波) appear on the surface and are likened to the skin (皮) of water (水). When waves (波) of wrinkles appear on the skin of a woman (女), we have 婆 — an old woman.



波长  
波荡  
波段  
波兰  
波浪

bō cháng  
bō dàng  
bō duàn  
Bō Lán  
bō làng

wavelength  
heave; surge  
wave band  
Poland  
wave

波涛  
波纹  
波折  
物价波动

bō tāo  
bō wén  
bō zhé  
wù jià bō dòng

great waves; billows  
ripple; corrugation  
twists and turns  
price fluctuation

*Example:*

事情发生了波折。

Shì qing fā shēng le bō zhé

Events took an unexpected turn.

# 海

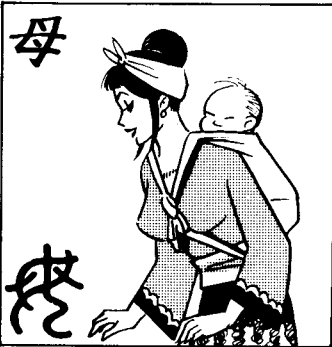
Hǎi

sea;  
ocean

母 is a picture of a woman with breasts for suckling a child, signifying mother (母).

每 compares a mother (母) with a sprout (艹), always reproducing; hence meaning every, always.

海 represents the sea, where there is always (每) plenty of water (氵)



PE-116

丶 丶 丶 氵 氵 海 海 海 海

海岸	hǎi àn	coast; seashore
海豹	hǎi bào	seal
海滨	hǎi bīn	seaside
海产	hǎi chǎn	marine products
海盗	hǎi dào	pirate; sea rover
海港	hǎi gǎng	seaport; harbour
海关检查	hǎi guān jiǎn chá	customs inspection
海军	hǎi jūn	navy

海枯石烂	hǎi kū shí làn	(even if) the seas run dry and the rocks crumble
海上	hǎi shàng	at sea; on the sea
海外	hǎi wài	overseas; abroad
海湾	hǎi wān	bay; gulf
海峡	hǎi xiá	strait; channel
海鲜	hǎi xiān	seafood
海员	hǎi yuán	seaman; sailor; mariner

*Example:*

海枯石烂心不变。

Hǎi kū shí làn xīn bù biàn

The sea may run dry and the rocks may crumble, but our hearts will always remain loyal.





# 法

Fǎ

law; statute

Water is essential to life and benefits everybody. Laws are also meant to benefit every citizen. Just as water ( 氵 ) removes ( 去 ) dirt, so the law ( 法 ) smoothens morals by removing vices. However, never resort to law; if you win, you lose; and if you lose, you're lost.



PE16



法案	fǎ àn		proposed law; bill
法宝	fǎ bǎo		a magic weapon
法定	fǎ dìng		legal; statutory
法定人数	fǎ dìng rén shù		quorum
法官	fǎ guān		judge; justice
法规	fǎ guī		laws and regulations
法令	fǎ lìng		laws and decrees

法律	fǎ lǜ		law; statute
法庭	fǎ tíng		court; tribunal
法网	fǎ wǎng		the net of justice; the arm of the law
法西斯	fǎ xī sī		fascist
法子	fǎ zi		way; method

**Example:**

我们得想个法子解决这个问题。

Wǒ men dé xiǎng gè fǎ zi jiě jué zhè ge wèn tí

We'll have to think of a way to solve the problem.

# 林

LÍN

forest

“A single fibre does not make a thread; a single tree does not make a forest,” so goes the saying. The character for tree is a pictograph: 木. Two trees form a company — a grove or forest: 林. Three trees make a crowd, signifying dense or overgrown: 森.



FENG

一	十	才	木	木	材	材	林							
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

艺林	yì lín	art circles
竹林	zhú lín	bamboo grove
林产品	lín chǎn pǐn	forest products
林带	lín dài	forest belt
林立	lín lì	stand in great numbers (like trees in a forest)
林木	lín mù	forest; woods
林荫道	lín yīn dào	boulevard; avenue

*Example:*

港口桅桅林立。

Gǎng kǒu wéi wéi lín lì

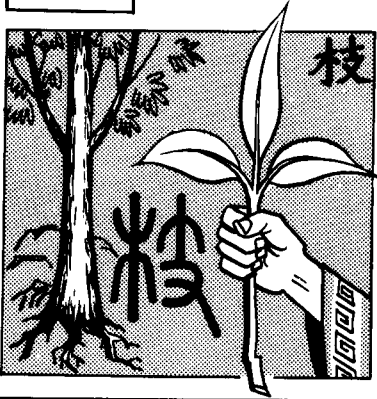
There is a forest of masts in the harbour.

# 枝

ZHĪ

branch

枝 is a branch (支) of a tree (木). 支 itself is a picture of the right hand (又) holding a twig (十) and means branch. Because branches form an integral part of a tree, "One branch moves, a hundred branches shake." 枯 means withered, like an old (古) tree (木) — one that has passed through ten (十) generations or mouths (口).



PENG

一	十	才	木	木	木	枝								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

枝杈	zhī chà	branch; twig
枝接	zhī jiē	scion grafting
枝节	zhī jié	branches and knots — minor matters; complication; unexpected difficulty
枝叶	zhī yè	branches and leaves; non-essentials
枝子	zhī zi	branch; twig

**Example:**

不要过多地注意那些枝枝节节。

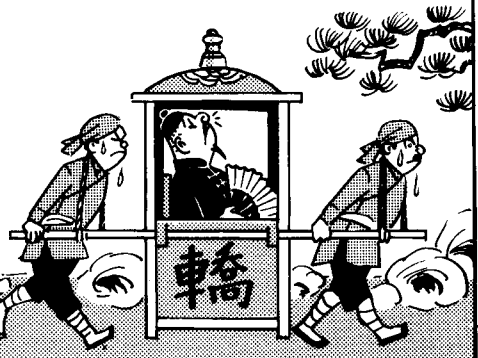
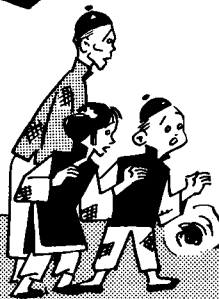
Bù yào guo duō de zhū yì nà xiē zhī zhī jié jié

Don't pay too much attention to the minor issues.

# 椅

Yǐ  
chair

People used to sitting on the floor once looked upon the chair (椅) as a strange, unusual (奇) thing of wood (木). The comfort of the chair impelled men (大) to utter exclamations of approval (可); hence 奇, meaning unusual. The sedan chair, however, was a status symbol, as noted in the saying: "The doctor who rides in a chair will not visit the poor."



PENGL

一 十 才 木 木 木 木 木 木 木 椅

椅子 yǐ zi chair  
椅子顶 yǐ zi dǐng balancing on a pyramid of chairs

Example:

他家很贫穷，连椅子也没有。

Tā jiā hěn pín qióng lián yǐ zi yě méi yǒu

He was so very poor that he had no chairs in his house.

# 楼 (樓)

LÓU  
storey

The phonetic 婁 refers to the part of a palace where women (女) are enclosed (中) and confined (毋). The addition of the tree radical (木) suggests a tower high as a tree and one with several floors: 楼.



一 十 才 木 木 木 木 木 木 木 楼 楼

楼板	lóu bǎn	floor; floorslab
楼房	lóu fáng	a building of two or more storeys
楼上	lóu shàng	upstairs
楼台	lóu tái	a high building; tower; balcony
楼梯	lóu tī	stairs; staircase
楼下	lóu xià	downstairs

*Example:*

楼上住的是一位退休老工人。

Lóu shàng zhù de shì yī wèi tuì xiū lǎo gōng rén

A retired worker lives upstairs.



# 疼

TÉNG pain; ache

Just as fire or fever suggests sickness, winter (冬) or intense cold is here combined with the radical for sickness (疒) to signify pain: 疼. However, young and old do not feel pain alike. In youth, the absence of pleasure is pain; in old age, the absence of pain is pleasure.



PENGL

、 一 广 疒 疒 疒 疒 疒 疼 疼 疼 疼

疼受  
疼痛

téng ài  
téng tòng

be very fond of; love dearly  
pain; ache; soreness

*Example:*

婆婆最疼小孙子。

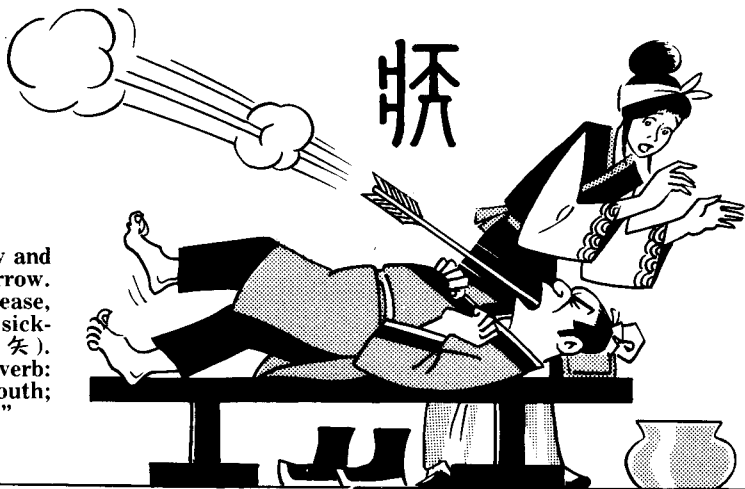
Pó po zuì téng xiǎo sūn zi

Granny dotes on her little grandson.

# 疾

Jí disease; ailment

Disease strikes suddenly and unexpectedly like an arrow. Hence 疾, meaning disease, made up of the radical for sickness (疒) and arrow (矢). According to the proverb: "Diseases enter by the mouth; misfortunes issue from it."



PENG

丶	疒	疒	疒	疒	疒	疾	疾	疾	疾					
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--

- |      |              |                             |
|------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| 眼疾   | yǎn jí       | eye trouble                 |
| 疾病   | jí bìng      | disease; illness            |
| 疾风   | jí fēng      | strong wind; gale           |
| 疾苦   | jí kǔ        | sufferings; hardships       |
| 疾言厉色 | jí yán lì sè | harsh words and stern looks |

*Example:*

他对人很和蔼，从不疾言厉色。

Tā duì rén hěn hé āi cóng bù jí yán lì sè

He is affable and is never brusque with people.

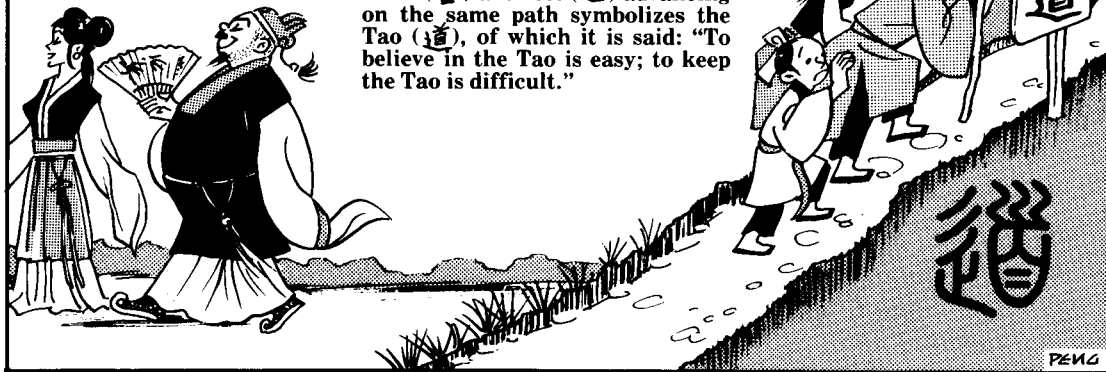


# 道

DÀO

way; path

首 is a pictograph of a hairy (丿) head (首) and means head or chief. Combined with 之 or 毛 (go), it produces 道—the way of virtue. Head (首) and feet (之) advancing on the same path symbolizes the Tao (道), of which it is said: “To believe in the Tao is easy; to keep the Tao is difficult.”



PENG



道德	dào dé	morals; morality; ethics
道贺	dào hè	congratulate
道教	Dào Jiào	Taoism
道具	dào jù	stage property; prop
道理	dào lǐ	principle; truth; hows and whys; reason; sense

道路	dào lù	road; way; path
道歉	dào qiàn	apologize; make an apology
道士	dào shi	Taoist priest
道喜	dào xǐ	congratulate somebody on a happy occasion
道谢	dào xiè	express one's thanks; thank

### Example:

你的话很有道理。

Nǐ de huà hěn yǒu dào lǐ

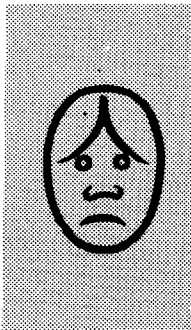
What you said is quite reasonable.

面

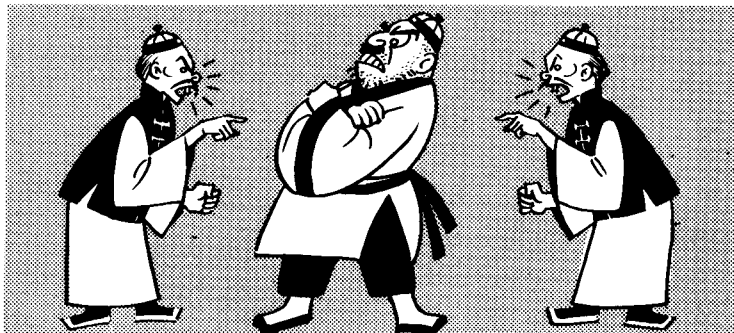
MIÀN

face

This radical incorporates 凵, an outline of the face, with 首 (head) featuring the eyes (目) as its most prominent part. Because a person is identified by his face, we know a man's face, not his mind. Nevertheless, "Be able to say in his face what you say behind his back."



囧  
目  
面



FENG

一 丿 了 丿 而 而 而 而 面

面对	miàn duì	face; confront
面对面	miàn duì miàn	facing each other; face-to-face
面粉	miàn fěn	wheat flour; flour
面红耳赤	miàn hóng ěr chì	be flushed
面积	miàn jī	area
面颊	miàn jiá	cheek

面具	miàn jù	mask
面貌	miàn mào	face; features
面目	miàn mù	face; features; look; aspect
面前	miàn qián	in front of; before
面熟	miàn shú	look familiar
面条	miàn tiáo	noodles
面子	miàn zi	reputation; prestige; face

*Example:*

展览会面积为三千平方米。

Zhǎn lǎn huì miàn jī wéi sān qiān píng fāng mǐ

The exhibition covers a floor space of 3000 square metres.

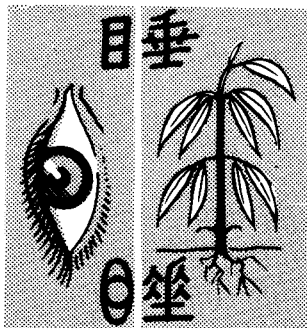


# 睡

SHUÌ

sleep

睡 is to have the eyes or eyelids (目) hanging down (垂) — to sleep. The phonetic 垂 or 埶 depicts a bough loaded with leaves (艹) hanging down towards the earth (土). Sleep, even if your eyes are closed, is not always a peaceful affair. According to the saying, “Attending to the Emperor is like sleeping with a tiger.”



FENG

丨	丩	月	月	目	目'	目 <sup>一</sup>	目 <sup>二</sup>	目 <sup>三</sup>	目 <sup>四</sup>	目 <sup>五</sup>	目 <sup>六</sup>	目 <sup>七</sup>	目 <sup>八</sup>	目 <sup>九</sup>	目 <sup>十</sup>		
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睡觉	shuì jiào	sleep
睡莲	shuì lián	water lily
睡梦	shuì mèng	sleep; slumber
睡眠	shuì mián	sleep
睡醒	shuì xǐng	wake up
睡衣	shuì yī	night clothes; pyjamas
睡意	shuì yì	sleepiness; drowsiness

*Example:*

一阵敲门声把他从睡梦中惊醒了。

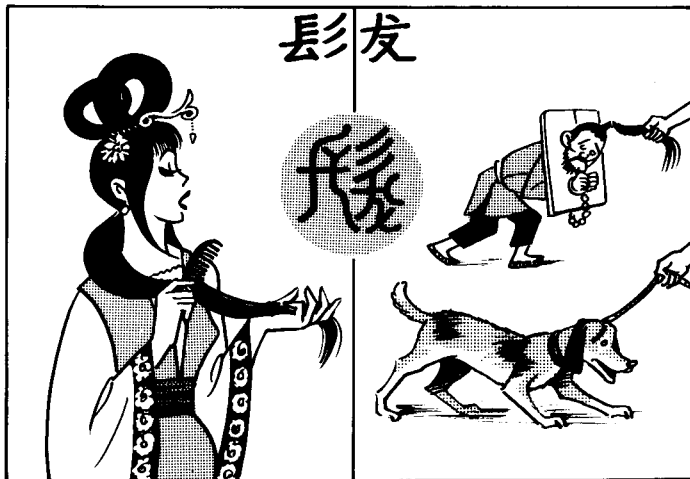
Yī zhèn qiāo mén shēng bǎ tā cóng shuì mèng zhōng jīng xǐng le

He was roused from sleep by a heavy pounding on the door.

# 发 (髮)

FÀ hair

The seal form of the radical 髮 is 𦘒. It depicts long hair (彡) tied with a band (一) and pinned with a brooch (彡). Three strokes are added to emphasize the locks (彡). The phonetic 发 or 𦘒 is a dog led by a leash — an allusion to the practice of leading underdogs by the hair.



FENG

一 丩 𦘒 发 发

理发	lǐ fà	haircut
发型	fà xíng	hair style; hairdo
发表	fā biǎo	publish; issue
发财	fā cái	get rich; make a fortune
发愁	fā chóu	worry; be anxious
发达	fā dá	developed; flourishing
发动	fā dòng	start; launch; mobilize
发抖	fā dǒu	shiver; shake; tremble

发愤	fā fèn	make a firm resolution
发慌	fā huāng	feel nervous; get flustered
发觉	fā jué	find; detect; discover
发明	fā míng	invent
发生	fā shēng	happen; occur; take place
发售	fā shòu	sell; put on sale
发言权	fā yán quán	right to speak
发展	fā zhǎn	develop; expand; grow

**Example:**

那里发生了强烈地震。

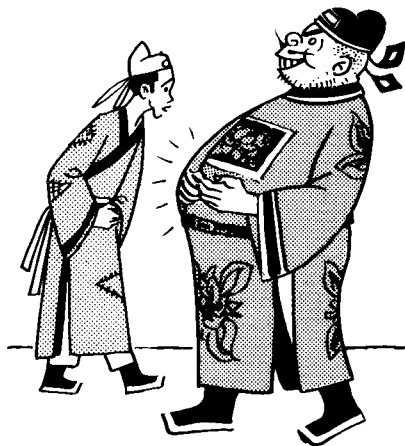
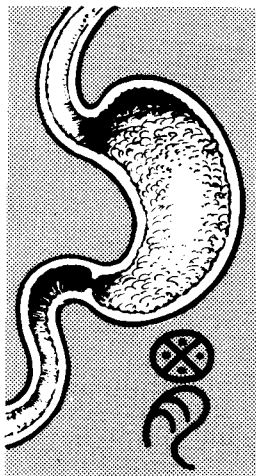
Nà lǐ fā shēng le qiáng liè dì zhèn

A violent earthquake occurred there.

胃

WÈI stomach

This ideograph combines two pictographs. The upper one is a pouch filled with rice: 𪚩; the lower, a piece of flesh: 月. Hence, stomach — a fleshy pouch filled with rice. Although a full stomach begets a contented mind, "Better be hungry and pure than well-filled and corrupt."



FENG

丨 冂 冂 田 田 胃 胃 胃

胃病	wèi bìng	stomach trouble; gastric disease
胃口	wèi kǒu	appetite; liking
胃溃疡	wèi kùi yáng	gastric ulcer
胃酸	wèi suān	hydrochloric acid in gastric juice
胃痛	wèi tòng	gastralgia
胃液	wèi yè	gastric juice

*Example:*

她的胃口很好，吃了很多。

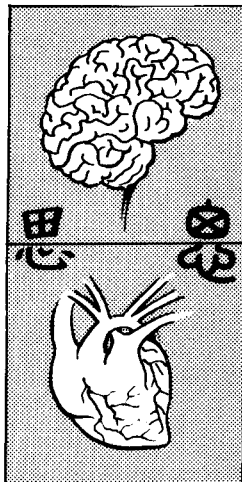
Tā de wèi kǒu hěn hǎo chī le hěn duō

She was eating a lot because she had a very good appetite.

思

Sī think

This ideograph combines the skull (囟) with the heart (心) to produce thought: 思. The faculties of reasoning and feeling are here exercised to create a balanced mind. And, according to the saying, "If you wish to know the mind of a man, listen to his words."



PENG

丨 冂 冂 田 田 田 思 思 思

思潮	sī cháo	trend of thought; ideological trend; thoughts
思考	sī kǎo	think deeply; ponder over; reflect on
思念	sī niàn	think of; long for; miss
思索	sī sǒu	think deeply; ponder
思想	sī xiǎng	thought; thinking; idea; ideology

*Example:*

我一夜没睡着，反复思索这个问题。

Wǒ yī yè méi shuì zhāo fǎn fù sī sǒu zhè ge wèn tí

I lay awake all night, turning the problem over and over in my mind.



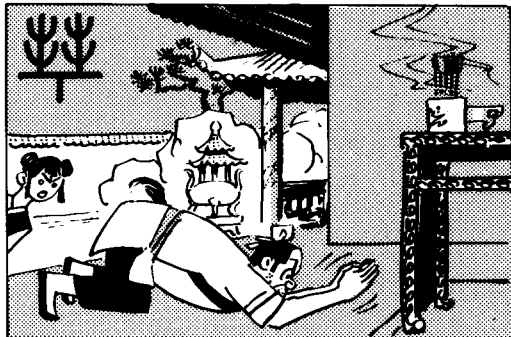


# 拜

BÀI

salute  
respect;

拜, to pay respects to man or god, was first written as 𠄎, depicting two hands (𠄎) hanging down (下 or 丅) in salutation or worship. With respect to worship, it has been said: "He who lives near the temple ridicules the gods." Also: "Far better it is to be respectful at home than to burn incense in a far place."



PENGL

丿 一 二 三 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 拜

拜别	bài bié	take leave of
拜倒	bài dǎo	prostrate oneself; fall on one's knees
拜访	bài fǎng	pay a visit
拜见	bài jiàn	pay a formal visit; call to pay respects
拜年	bài nián	pay a New Year call
拜寿	bài shòu	congratulate an elderly person on his birthday
拜托	bài tuō	request somebody to do something

### Example:

姑妈，我们给您拜年来啦！

Gū mā wǒ men gěi nín bài nián lái la

Auntie, we've come to wish you a Happy New Year.

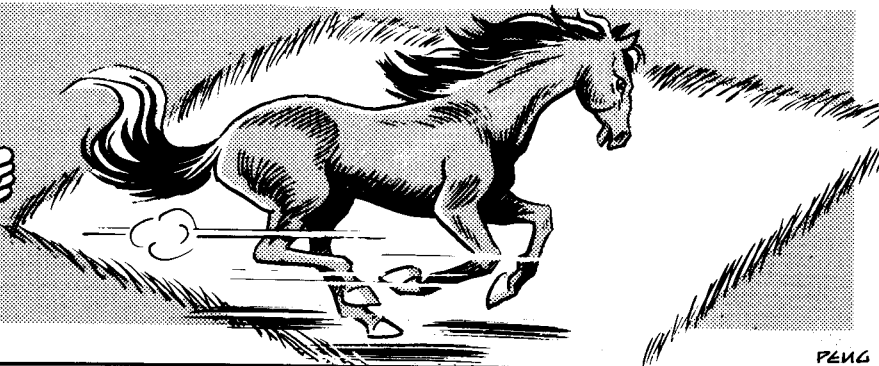
放

FÀNG

release

放 means to release — to drive out (支) into an open space or pasture (方). The radical 支 (攴) is a hand with stick; the phonetic 方 is a square or open space. Horses or cattle released for grazing can always be rounded up, but “Words once released cannot be recaptured by the swiftest steeds.”

攴



FANG

丶 一 宀 方 方 攴 放 放

放出	fàng chū	give out; let out; emit
放大	fàng dà	enlarge; magnify; amplify
放胆	fàng dǎn	act boldly and with confidence
放荡	fàng dàng	dissolute; dissipated
放工	fàng gōng	(of workers) knock off
放火	fàng huǒ	set fire to; set on fire
放假	fàng jià	have a vacation; have a day off
放宽	fàng kuān	relax restrictions; relax

放弃	fàng qì	abandon; give up; renounce
放下	fàng xià	lay down; put down
放心	fàng xīn	set one's mind at rest
放学	fàng xué	classes are over
放映	fàng yìng	show; project
放置	fàng zhì	lay up; lay aside
放逐	fàng zhú	send into exile; banish

Example:

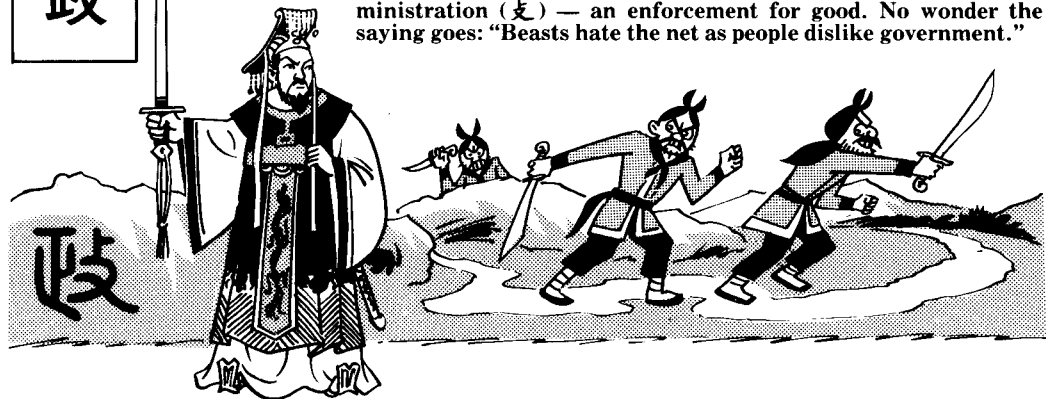
你 放 心 ， 一 切 都 会 安 排 好 的 。

Nǐ fàng xīn yī qiè dōu huì ān pái hǎo de.  
You can rest assured that everything will be all right.

政

ZHÈNG  
government

The radical 支 represents the right hand wielding the rod of authority. The phonetic 正 signifies a foot (止) walking the straight way (一). Hence 政 which means government, an upright (正) administration (支) — an enforcement for good. No wonder the saying goes: “Beasts hate the net as people dislike government.”



PEMG

一	丨	下	正	正	政	政							
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政变	zhèng biàn	coup d'état
政策	zhèng cè	policy
政党	zhèng dǎng	political party
政敌	zhèng dí	political opponent
政法	zhèng fǎ	politics and law
政府	zhèng fǔ	government

政界	zhèng jiè	political circles; government circles
政局	zhèng jú	political situation; political scene
政客	zhèng kè	politician
政权	zhèng quán	political power; regime
政治	zhèng zhì	politics; political affairs

*Example:*

哥哥在政府部门工作。

Gē ge zài zhèng fǔ bù mén gōng zuō

My elder brother works in the civil service.

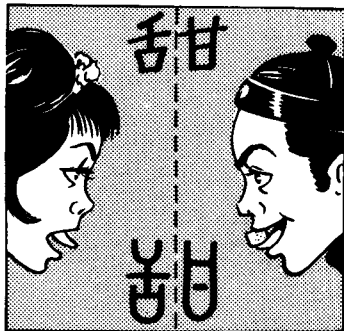


# 甜

TIÁN

sweet;  
pleasant

舌 shows the tongue (舌) in the mouth (口). 甘 depicts something (-) worth holding in the mouth (口). So 甜 means sweet (甘) to the tongue (舌). However, beware of anything sweet from the tongue, for the tongue is like a sharp knife that kills without drawing blood. Hence the proverb: "Bitter words are medicine; sweet words bring illness."



PENGL

丿	二	千	千	舌	舌	舌	甜	甜	甜				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

甜美	tián měi	sweet; luscious; pleasant; refreshing
甜蜜	tián mì	sweet; happy
甜品	tián pǐn	sweetmeats
甜头	tián tóu	sweet taste; pleasant flavour; good benefit (as an inducement)
甜味	tián wèi	sweet taste
甜言蜜语	tián yán mì yǔ	sweet words and honeyed phrases; fine-sounding words

*Example:*

这西瓜好甜哪！

Zhè xī guā hǎo tián na

This watermelon is really sweet!

叫

JIAO

call

叫 is to call out (口) the measure (斗). The ancient form of 斗 depicts a measuring ladle (勺) with ten (+): 𠂔. Although vendors shout out their wares, a melon seller never cries "Bitter melons!" nor a wine seller "Thin wine!"



叫喊	jiào hǎn	shout; yell; howl
叫好	jiào hǎo	applaud
叫唤	jiào huan	cry out; call out
叫苦	jiào kǔ	complain of hardship or suffering; moan and groan
叫骂	jiào mà	shout curses
叫门	jiào mén	call at the door to be let in
叫醒	jiào xǐng	wake up; awaken
叫座	jiào zuò	draw a large audience; draw well; appeal to the audience

*Example:*

外边有人叫你。

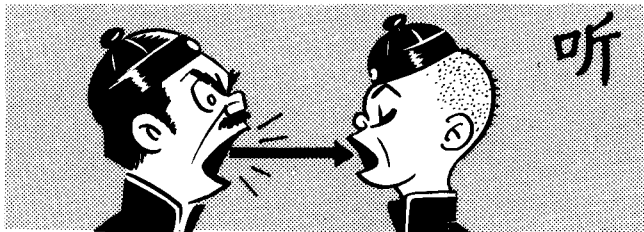
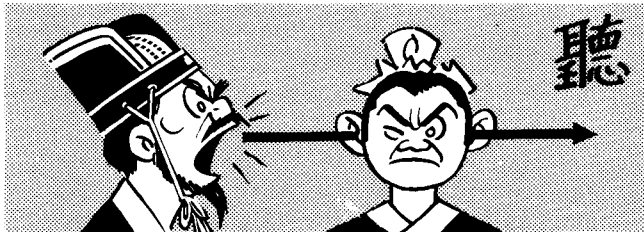
Wài bian yǒu rén jiào nǐ

Somebody outside is calling you.

# 听 (聽)

TĪNG hear; listen

聽 is the rectification (直 or 正) of the heart (心) of a listener or disciple (徒) by his ear (耳); hence to listen or obey. The simplified form 听 combines 口 (mouth) with 斤 (discerning), i.e., to discern what comes from the mouth — by listening. It may even suggest that most people today listen with their mouths!



PENG

丨	冂	口	𠂆	听	听														
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

听从	tīng cóng	obey; heed; comply with
听而不闻	tīng ér bù wén	hear but pay no attention
听话	tīng huà	be obedient
听觉	tīng jué	sense of hearing
听说	tīng shuō	be told; hear of
听筒	tīng tǒng	(telephone) receiver; headphone; earphone
听写	tīng xiě	dictation
听众	tīng zhòng	audience; listeners

*Example:*

我们从来没听说过这种事。

Wǒ men cóng lái méi tīng shuō guo zhè zhǒng shì

We've never heard of such a thing.

聋

(聋)

LÓNG deaf

Because the dragon is king of the supernatural creatures (the others being the unicorn, the phoenix and the tortoise), it can afford to turn a deaf ear to anything. Hence dragon's (龙) ear (耳), meaning deaf: 聋. But let not those who cannot hear well lose heart: "In the kingdom of the deaf, the one-eared man is king!"



P2114

一	十	九	龙	龙	龙	龙	龙	龙	龙	龙	耳				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

聋哑

lóng yǎ

deaf and dumb; deaf-mute

聋子

lóng zi

a deaf person

*Example:*

她在一间聋哑学校当教员。

Tā zài yí jiān lóng yǎ xué xiào dāng jiào yuán

She works as a teacher in the school for deaf-mutes.



# 喜

xǐ

happiness;  
pleasure

喜 or happiness is expressed by 喜 (music) and 口 (singing). 喜 depicts the ancient drum on its stand (豆) with its stretched skin (一) and a straightened right hand (丿) striking it. 口 represents the mouth singing. True happiness, however, comes from unselfish giving; and when you make two people happy, one of them is probably you.



FENG

一	十	士	古	吉	查	查	喜	喜	喜	喜			
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--

喜爱	xǐ ài	like; love; be fond of; be keen on
喜欢	xǐ huan	like; love; happy; elated; filled with joy
喜酒	xǐ jiǔ	wedding feast
喜剧	xǐ jù	comedy
喜怒无常	xǐ nù wú cháng	subject to changing moods
喜气洋洋	xǐ qì yáng yáng	full of joy; jubilant
喜事	xǐ shì	happy event; wedding
喜新厌旧	xǐ xīn yàn jiù	love the new and loathe the old – be fickle in affection

**Example:**

这孩子真讨人喜欢。

Zhè hái zǐ zhēn tǎo rén xǐ huan

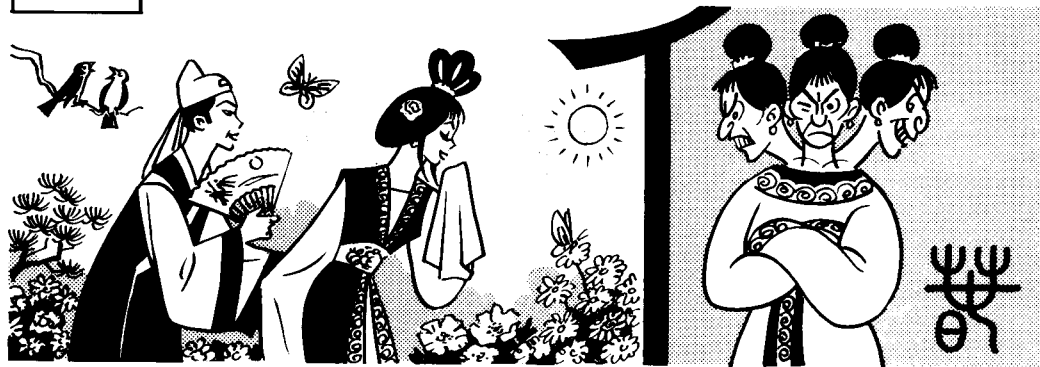
This is a lovable child.

# 春

CHŪN

spring

春, the seal character for spring (春), signifies the growth and outburst (支) of vegetation (艹) under the influence of the sun (日). As unpredictable and changeable as the weather, spring comes either early or late each year. Hence the proverb: "Spring has a stepmother's face."



PENGL

一	=	三	𠂇	夫	𠂇	春	春	春						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

春风满面	chūn fēng mǎn miàn	beaming with satisfaction; radiant with happiness
春光	chūn guāng	sights and sounds of spring
春季	chūn jì	spring; springtime
春卷	chūn juǎn	spring roll
春联	chūn lián	Spring Festival couplets (pasted on gateposts or door panels); New Year scrolls
春秋	chūn qiū	spring and autumn; year; the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.)
春天	chūn tiān	spring; springtime

**Example:**

看他春风满面，一定有好消息告诉我们。

Kān tā chūn fēng mǎn miàn yī dìng yǒu hǎo xiāo xi gào su wǒ men.

His face is beaming with happiness; he must have some good news for us.

唱

CHANG sing

唱 is composed of 日 (sun) and 田 (speak). 田 is the mouth (口) that exhales a breath; by extension, exhalation and emanation. So 唱 means prosperous or splendid, just as the sun sends forth rays and the mouth puts forth words.

唱 therefore refers to singing which produces a more refined quality of the voice than an ordinary conversation.



PEI 16



唱词	chàng cí	libretto; words of a ballad
唱歌	chàng gē	sing (a song)
唱工	chàng gōng	art of singing; singing
唱片	chàng piàn	gramophone record
唱诗班	chàng shī bān	choir
电唱机	diàn chàng jī	record player

Example:

她很会唱歌。

Tā hěn huì chàng gē

She is a good singer.

# 歌

GĒ

song

可 is an exclamation of approval (丁) from the mouth (口) and means can or may.

哥 is 可 doubled, suggesting singing, now used for addressing elder brother by sound loan.

歌 adds breath (欠) to singing (哥) to produce a song.



FENG

一 丁 可 可 可 可 哥 哥 歌 歌 歌

歌本	gē běn	songbook
歌词	gē cí	words of a song
歌功颂德	gē gōng sòng dé	eulogize somebody's virtues and achievements
歌喉	gē hóu	(singer's) voice
歌剧	gē jù	opera
歌谱	gē pǔ	music of a song

歌曲	gē qǔ	song
歌手	gē shǒu	singer; vocalist
歌颂	gē sòng	sing the praises of
歌舞	gē wǔ	song and dance
歌谣	gē yáo	ballad; folk song; nursery rhyme
歌咏比赛	gē yǒng bǐ sài	singing contest

*Example:*

这首歌的歌词很动人。

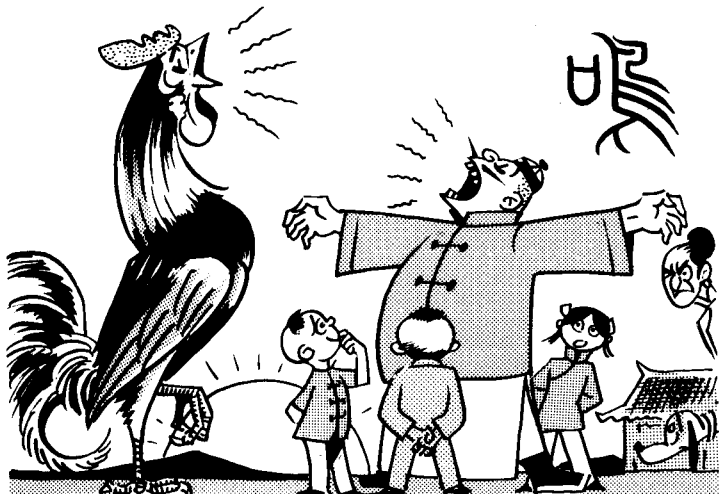
Zhè shǒu gē de gē cí hěn dòng rén

The words of this song are most touching.

# 鸣 (鳴)

MÍNG cry of bird,  
animal or insect

Because a bird (鸟) chirps or sings with its mouth (口), we have the character 鸣 applied to the cry of birds, animals or insects. Sometimes even man crows — like the rooster that thinks the sun rises to hear him crow.



FENG



鸡鸣	jī míng	the crow of a cock
鸣谢	míng xiè	express one's thanks formally
鸣放	míng fàng	airing of views
鸣锣开道	míng luó kāi dào	beat gongs to clear the way (for officials in feudal times); prepare the public for a coming event
鸣禽	míng qín	songbird; singing bird
鸣冤叫屈	míng yuān jiào qū	complain and call for redress; voice grievances

*Example:*

钟鸣三下。

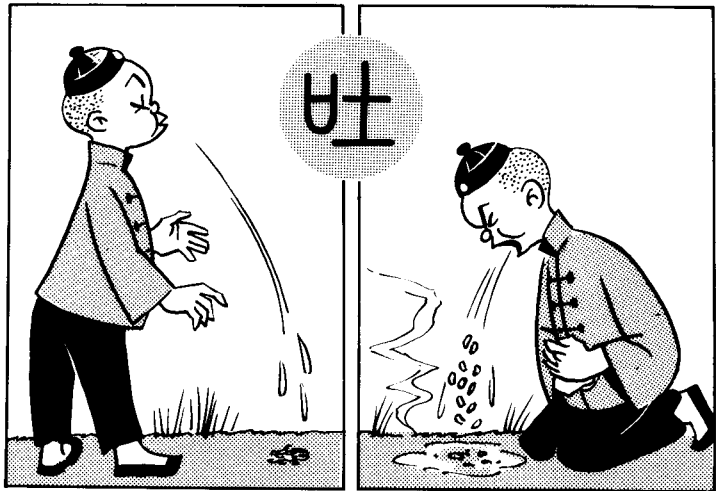
Zhōng míng sān xià

The clock struck three.

吐

Tǔ spit out  
Tù vomit

The ideograph 吐, literally from mouth (口) to earth (土), means to spit or vomit. Figuratively, it means to disclose or reveal the truth — like spilling the beans or letting the cat out of the bag. In this sense, beware: “A very big secret can be vomited out of a little mouth.”



PENG

丨 凵 口 一 叶 吐

吐露	tǔ lù	reveal; tell
吐气	tǔ qì	feel elated after unburdening oneself of resentment
吐沫	tù mò	saliva; spittle; spit
吐血	tù xiě	spitting blood; haematemesis
吐泻	tù xiè	vomitting and diarrhoea

*Example:*

他不愿意吐露真情。

Tā bù yuàn yì tǔ lù zhēn qíng

He was reluctant to reveal the truth.

# 如

RÚ

like; as

Ideographically, 如 is to speak (口) like or as a woman (女), that is, appropriately to the circumstances and the disposition of the man she desires to influence. Testifying to such persuasive, womanly skill is the saying: "The walls of a city are raised by men's wisdom but overthrown by women's wiles."



PENG

人	女	女	如	如	如														
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

如常	rú cháng	as usual
如此	rú cǐ	so; such; in this way
如此而已	rú cǐ ér yǐ	that's what it all adds up to
如果	rú guǒ	if; in case; in the event of
如何	rú hé	how; what
如今	rú jīn	nowadays; now
如期	rú qī	as scheduled; on schedule

如意	rú yì	as one wishes
如意算盘	rú yì suàn pán	wishful thinking
如鱼得水	rú yú dé shuǐ	feel just like fish in water; be in one's element
如愿以偿	rú yuàn yǐ cháng	have one's wish fulfilled; achieve what one wishes

**Example:**

会议将如期召开。

Huì yì jiāng rú qī zhào kāi

The conference will be convened as scheduled.

# 娘

NÍANG

mother;  
young mother

The modern form 娘 signifies a woman (女) who is virtuous and respectable (良) — a good woman, a mother or a young woman.

The old form 孃 stands for a homely and helpful (窳) woman (女). Of such a woman it is said: "The homely woman is precious in the home, but at a feast the beautiful one is preferred."



PENG

𠃉 女 女 女 孃 孃 孃 孃 娘 娘 娘

新娘	xīn niang	bride
娘家	niang jia	a married woman's parents' home
娘娘	niang niang	empress or imperial concubine of the first rank; goddess
娘胎	niang tai	mother's womb

*Example:*

嫂嫂回娘家去了。

Sǎo sǎo huí niang jia qù le

My sister-in-law has gone to visit her parents.

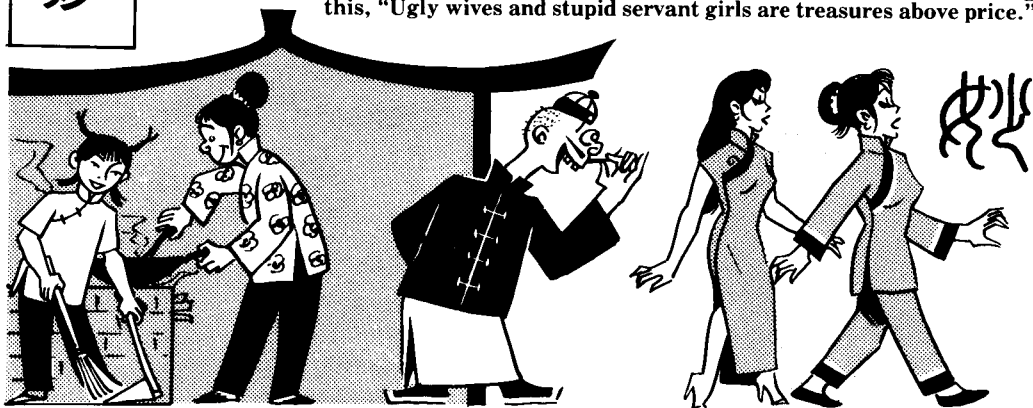


妙

MIÀO

wonderful

At 17 or 18 there are no ugly girls. So the characters 少 (young) and 女 (woman) together form the ideograph 妙, an adjective of admiration meaning wonderful, excellent and beautiful. Notwithstanding this, "Ugly wives and stupid servant girls are treasures above price."



PENAG

ノ	女	女	如	如	如	小	妙										
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

妙不可言

miào bù kě yán

too wonderful for words; most intriguing

妙计

miào jì

excellent plan; brilliant scheme

妙诀

miào jué

a clever way of doing something; knack

妙趣横生

miào qù héng shēng

full of wit and humour; very witty

妙手回春

miào shǒu huí chūn

(of a doctor) effect a miraculous cure and bring the dying back to life

妙用

miào yòng

magical effect

妙语

miào yǔ

witty remark; witticism

*Example:*

他回答得很妙。

Tā huí dá dé hěn miào

He made a clever answer.

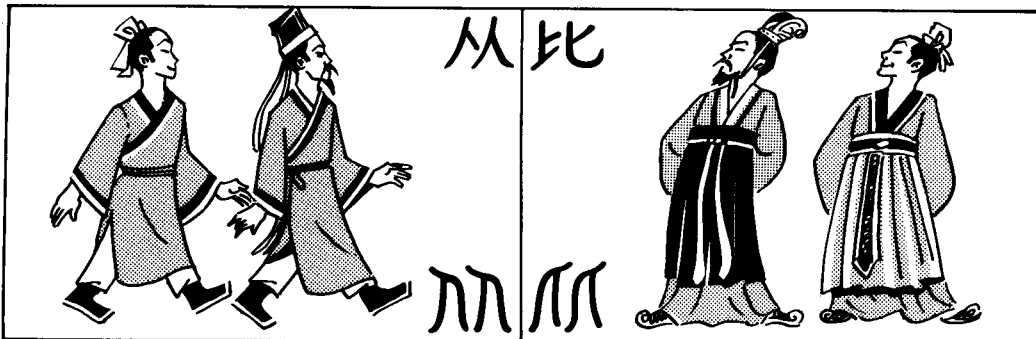


**比**

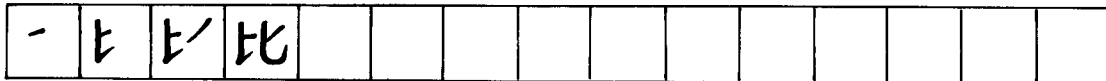
Bǐ

compare

The seal form of 比 reveals this character as an inverted form of 从 (follow). It represents two men standing as if to compare heights. "When compared with those above," so goes the saying, "there is something lacking; but compared with those below, there is something to spare."



FENG



比方	bǐ fāng	analogy; instance
比分	bǐ fēn	score
比价	bǐ jià	price relations; parity; rate of exchange
比较	bǐ jiào	compare; contrast; fairly; comparatively; quite; rather
比率	bǐ lǜ	ratio; rate
比如	bǐ rú	for example; for instance
比赛	bǐ sài	match; competition
比喻	bǐ yù	metaphor; analogy

**Example:**

这只是一个比喻的说法。

Zhè zhǐ shì yī ge bǐ yù de shuō fǎ

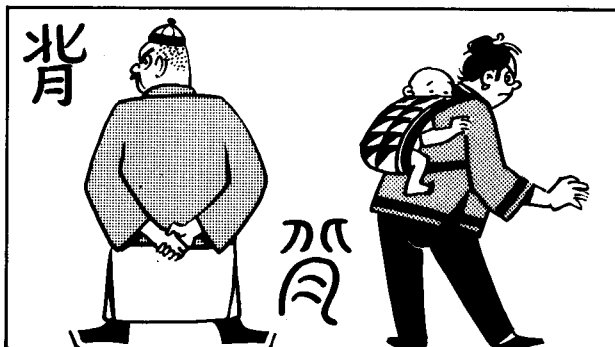
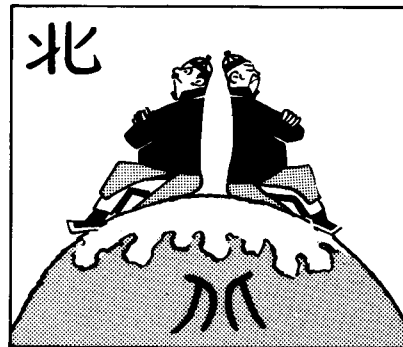
This is just a figure of speech.

# 背

BEI  
back; oppose

BEI  
carry on the  
back

A person sitting facing the south (as is the custom) and back to back with another suggests north: 北. Turning one's back on another signifies opposition. Hence 背, referring to the back (北) of the body (月), may mean to oppose or to carry on the back.



PENG

丨	丿	㇇	㇇	北	北	北	北	北						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

背痛	bèi tòng	backache
背地里	bèi dì li	behind somebody's back; privately; on the sly
背后	bèi hòu	behind; at the back; in the rear
背脊	bèi jǐ	the back of the human body
背井离乡	bèi jǐng lí xiāng	leave one's native place (especially against one's will)
背景	bèi jǐng	background; backdrop
背叛	bèi pàn	betray; forsake
背诵	bèi sòng	recite; repeat from memory

*Example:*

我怕背不起这样的责任。

Wǒ pà bēi bù qǐ zhè yàng de zé rèn

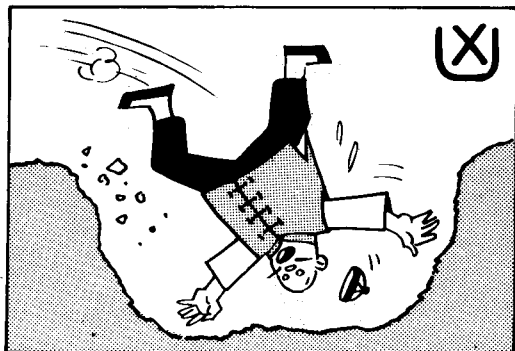
I'm afraid I can't shoulder such a responsibility

凶

XIONG

unfortunate;  
ominous

凶 means unfortunate, symbolized by a man falling upside down (×) into a pit (凵). Calamities do not always come by accident. According to the proverb, "Calamity comes by means of the mouth."



ノ

×

凵

凶

凶残

xiōng cán

fierce and cruel; savage and cruel

凶多吉少

xiōng duō jí shǎo

bode ill rather than well; be fraught with grim possibilities

凶恶

xiōng è

fierce, ferocious; fiendish

凶犯

xiōng fàn

one who has committed homicide; murderer

凶猛

xiōng měng

violent; ferocious

凶器

xiōng qì

tool or weapon for criminal purposes; lethal weapon

凶杀

xiōng shā

homicide; murder

凶手

xiōng shǒu

murderer; assassin; assailant

*Example:*

这个人样子真凶。

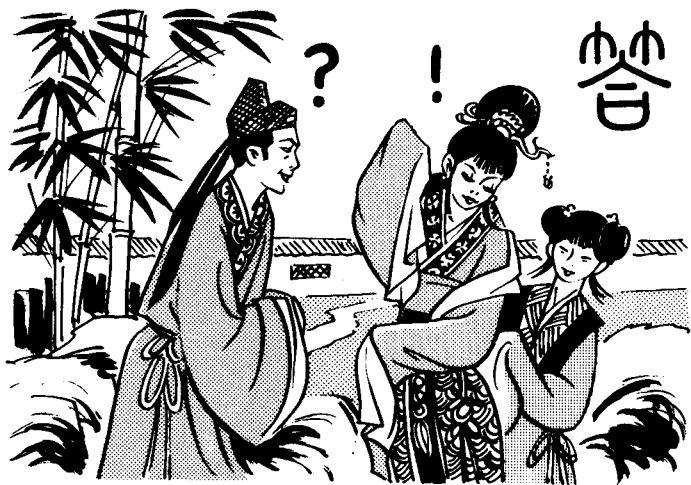
Zhè ge rén yàng zi zhēn xiōng

This chap looks really fierce.

# 答

DÁ reply; answer

Because of its beauty, design and harmony (合), the bamboo (竹) is used here as a perfect example of an answer or reply: 答. However, like bamboos, answers come in various lengths. Many a short question is evaded by a long answer.



FENG



答非所问	dá fēi suǒ wèn	an irrelevant answer
答案	dá àn	answer; solution; key
答辩	dá biàn	reply (to a charge, query or an argument)
答词	dá cí	thank-you speech; answering speech; reply
答复	dá fù	answer; reply
答谢	dá xiè	express appreciation; acknowledge
答应	dá ying	answer; respond; agree; promise; comply with

*Example:*

你 怎 么 不 答 话 ？

Nǐ zěn me bù dá huà

Why don't you answer?



# 井

JǐNG well

Originally the seal form 井 represented fields divided among eight families, with the well in the middle plot to serve the public. The well also serves to expose man's inclination to faultfinding: "One does not blame the shortness of the rope, but the deepness of the well."



PENG

一 二 井 井

矿井

kuàng jǐng

pit; mine

油井

yóu jǐng

oil well; neat; orderly

井场

jǐng chǎng

well site

井底之蛙

jǐng dǐ zhī wā

a frog in a well — a person with a very limited outlook

井架

jǐng jià

derrick

井井有条

jǐng jǐng yǒu tiáo

in perfect order; shipshape; methodical

井水不犯河水

jǐng shuǐ bù fàn hé shuǐ

well water does not intrude into river water —

I'll mind my own business, you mind yours

*Example:*

各种仪器、工具摆得井井有条。

Gè zhǒng yí qì gōng jù bǎi de jǐng jǐng yǒu tiáo

All the instruments and tools are kept in perfect order.



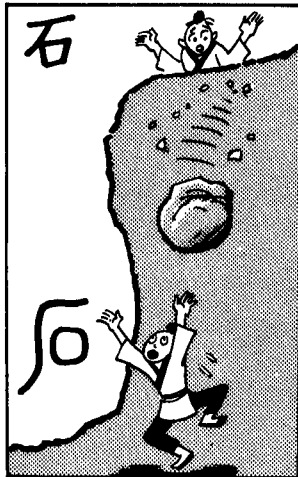
石

SHÍ

stone

石 is a picture of a piece of stone or rock (石) falling from a cliff (厂).

岩 is a steep rock (石) or cliff that looks like a hill (山). The rock, being strong, symbolizes integrity. Hence: "Slander cannot destroy an honest man; when the flood recedes the rock appears."



岩

PENGLI

一 厂 丌 石 石

石斑鱼	shí bān yú	grouper
石壁	shí bì	cliff; precipice
石沉大海	shí chén dà hǎi	like a stone dropped into the sea – disappear forever
石雕	shí diāo	stone carving; carved stone
石膏	shí gāo	gypsum; plaster stone
石工	shí gōng	masonry; stonemason; mason

石灰	shí huī	lime
石榴	shí liú	pomegranate
石头	shí tóu	stone; rock
石印	shí yìn	lithographic printing; lithography
石英	shí yīng	quartz
石油	shí yóu	petroleum; oil
石子	shí zǐ	cobblestone; cobble; pebble

*Example:*

这块石头是从山上拾回来的。

Zhè kuài shí tóu shì cóng shān shàng shì huí lái de

This stone was picked up from the mountain.

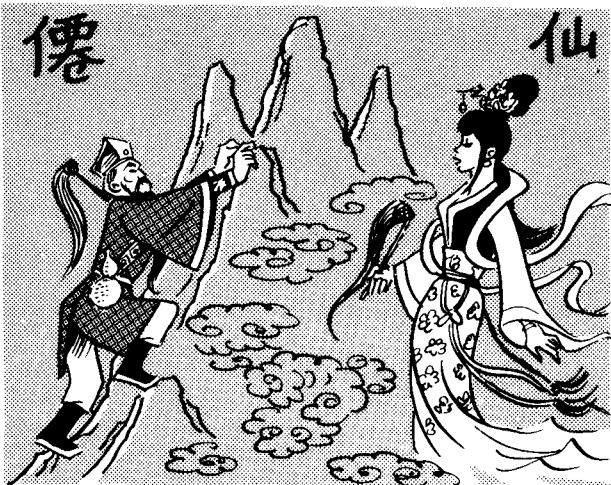
仙

XIĀN

fairy;  
recluse

The ancient form 僊 signifies a human (人) who rises by climbing with his head (僊) and four hands (僊), probably after the manner of a monkey. An official seal (丩) is added to denote promotion. The modern form 仙 associates person (亻) with mountain (山), suggesting recluse and fairy.

僊  
僊  
僊  
仙



PE116

丩	亻	亻	仙	仙							
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

仙丹	xiān dān	elixir of life
仙姑	xiān gū	female immortal; sorceress
仙鹤	xiān hè	red-crowned crane
仙境	xiān jìng	fairyland; wonderland; paradise
仙女	xiān nǚ	female celestial; fairy maiden
仙人掌	xiān rén zhǎng	cactus

*Example:*

这棵仙人掌有很多刺。

Zhè kē xiān rén zhǎng yǒu hěn duō cì

This cactus is covered with prickles.

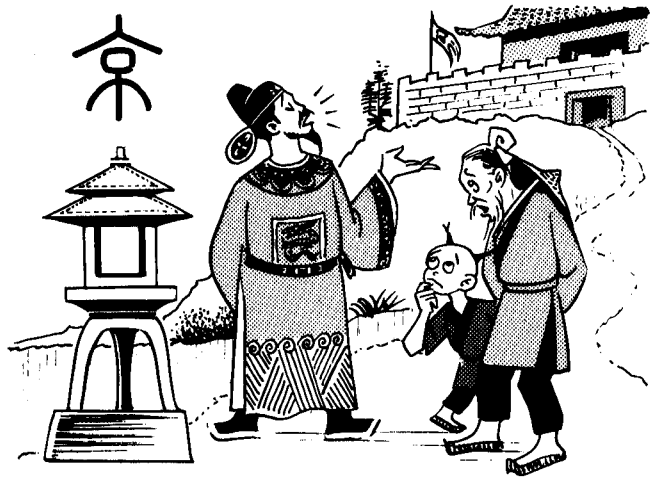


# 京

JĪNG

capital city

京 is derived from 高 (high). It is a contraction of 高 with the lower part replaced by 小, a pivot, conveying the idea of loftiness and centrality. So lofty is the capital city that it is said: "One who can speak, speaks of the city; one who cannot, talks merely of household affairs."



PENGL

、	一	六	六	古	亨	京	京							
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

京城	jīng chéng	the capital of a country
京剧	jīng jù	Beijing opera

*Example:*

妈妈最喜欢看京剧。

Mā ma zuì xǐ huan kàn jīng jù

My mother especially likes to watch **Beijing opera**.

# 空

KŌNG empty

KÒNG spare time

The radical is 宀 (cave) — a space (宀) obtained by the removal or separation (八) of rock or earth. When a cave (穴) is excavated by labour (工) we have the character for empty: 空. 空 also means at leisure or free from work.



PENG

、	八	宀	穴	穴	空	空	空						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

空洞	kōng dòng	cavity; empty
空防	kōng fáng	air defence
空话	kōng huà	empty talk; idle talk
空欢喜	kōng huān xǐ	rejoice too soon
空间	kōng jiān	space
空军	kōng jūn	air force

空阔	kōng kuò	open; spacious
空前绝后	kōng qián jué hòu	unprecedented
空头支票	kōng tóu zhī piào	dud cheque
空想	kōng xiǎng	idle dream; fantasy
空运	kōng yùn	air transport; airlift
空中	kōng zhōng	in the sky; aerial; overhead

**Example:**

别空想了，还是从实际出发吧。

Bié kōng xiǎng le hái shì cóng shí jì chū fā ba

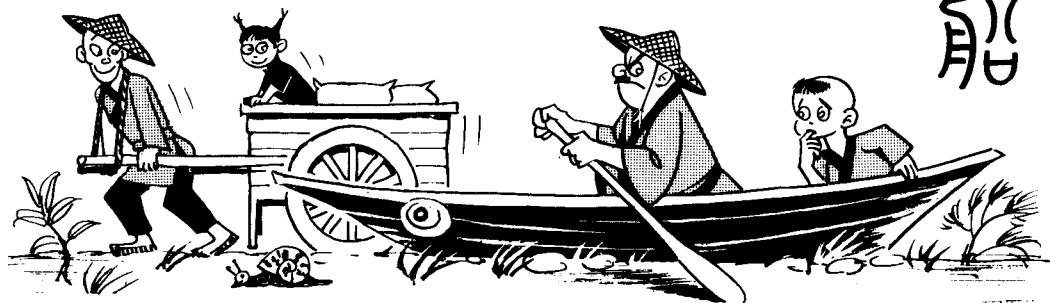
Stop daydreaming. Be realistic.

# 船

CHUÁN

boat; ship

As a memory aid, 船 could refer to a boat (舟) with eight (八) survivors or mouths (口) — an allusion to Noah's Ark. The radical 舟 is a picture of a boat. The phonetic 舟 probably means a coast; so 舟 is a coastal (之舟) vessel (舟). No matter how useful such a vessel is, "Like a thread without a needle, a boat is useless without water."



PENG

'	丿	舟	舟	舟	舟	舟	船	船				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

船埠	chuán bù	wharf; quay
船壳	chuán ké	hull
船尾	chuán wěi	stern
船坞	chuán wù	dock; shipyard
船员	chuán yuán	(ship's) crew
船长	chuán zhǎng	captain; skipper
船只	chuán zhī	shipping; vessels

*Example:*

这艘船的船员们都很勤劳。

Zhè sōu chuán de chuán yuán men dōu hěn qín láo

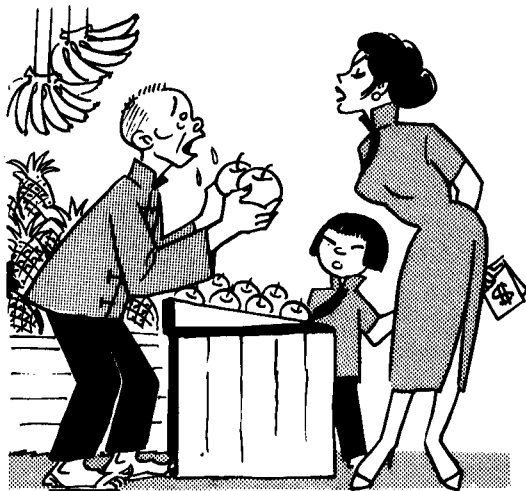
The sailors on this ship are hardworking.



圆 (圓)

YUÁN round; dollar

This character for round or dollar has undergone many changes since its original form: ○. The ideograph 員, meaning round (○) like a cowrie (貝), soon replaced it. Then it was altered to 圓, being reclarified and surrounded by 口. Although hollowed out to 圆, the dollar is still changeable; it's easier to change dollars into goods than goods into dollars!



PENGL

丨 冂 冂 冂 冂 冂 冂 圆 圆 圆

圆规	yuán guī	compasses
圆滑	yuán huá	smooth and evasive; slick and sly
圆满	yuán mǎn	satisfactory
圆圈	yuán quān	circle; ring
圆舞曲	yuán wǔ qǔ	waltz
圆形	yuán xíng	circular; round
圆周	yuán zhōu	circumference
圆珠笔	yuán zhū bǐ	ball-point pen; ball-pen

*Example:*

问题圆满地解决了。

Wèn tí yuán mǎn de jiě jué le

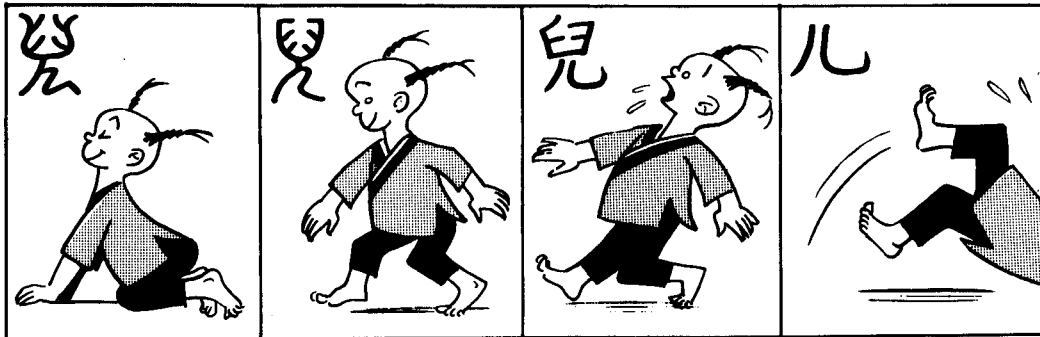
The problem has been solved satisfactorily.



儿 (兒)

儿 is a pictograph of the growing child — from the crawling infant with open fontanels (兒) to the little toddler (兒) with wobbly legs, now simplified to its present form: 儿. The loving care shown in the delineation of this character calls to mind the saying: "To understand your parents' love, raise your own children."

ÉR infant; child



PEM6



儿歌	ér gē	children's song; nursery rhymes
儿科	ér kē	(department of) paediatrics
儿女	ér nǚ	sons and daughters; children
儿孙	ér sūn	children and grandchildren; descendants
儿童	ér tóng	children

*Example:*

他有一儿一女。

Tā yǒu yī ér yī nǚ

He has a son and a daughter.

士

According to this ideograph, a scholar or learned man (士) is a rarity: one (一) out of ten (十). He is also acquainted from one to ten, i.e., with all things. Scholars are a country's treasure, and with good reason: "It takes a tree ten years to grow up; it takes a century to educate man."

SHI scholar; gentleman



FENG

一 十 士

士兵	shì bīng	rank-and-file soldiers; privates
士女	shì nǚ	young men and women
士气	shì qì	morale
士绅	shì shēn	gentry
士卒	shì zú	soldiers; privates

*Example:*

我军士气高昂。

Wǒ jūn shì qì gāo āng

Our army's morale is high.

# 做

ZUÒ

make;  
produce

做 sets forth man (亻) with a cause (故) to produce an effect. Hence the meaning: to make or produce. It also suggests man (亻) toiling (支) until he gets old (古), sometimes for a fruitless cause. In the words of the proverb: "The hard work of a hundred years may be destroyed in an hour."



PENG

丷	亻	亻	亻	亻	亻	亻	亻	亻	亻	做	做				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

做东	zuò dōng	play the host
做法	zuò fǎ	way of doing or making a thing
做工	zuò gōng	do manual work; work
做鬼	zuò guǐ	play tricks; play an underhand game
做客	zuò kè	be a guest
做礼拜	zuò lǐ bài	go to church; be at church
做梦	zuò mèng	have a dream; dream
做贼心虚	zuò zéi xīn xū	have a guilty conscience

*Example:*



我昨天到一个老朋友家里去做客。

Wǒ zuó tiān dào yī ge lǎo péng you jiā li qù zuò kè

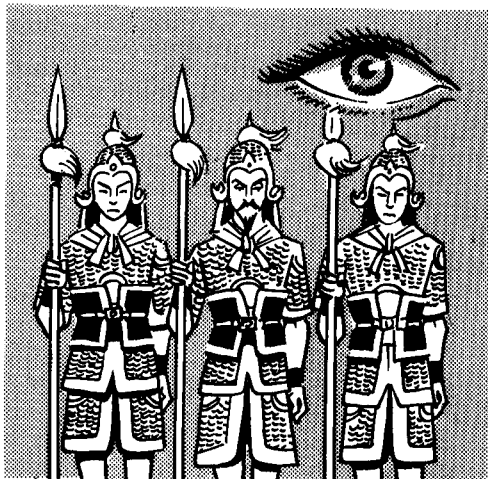
I was a guest at an old friend's yesterday.

众 (衆)

ZHÒNG crowd; many

The seal form  shows three or many persons (人人) as viewed by the eye (目). Modified to , it was again altered to 众 — three persons, representing a crowd. It's easier to follow the crowd than to get the crowd to follow you. In the words of the proverb: "An army of a 1000 is easy to find; but, ah, how difficult to find a general!"

眾  
眾  
眾  
眾



PENG

丿 人 人 人 人 众

众多	zhòng duō	multitudinous; numerous
众口难调	zhòng kǒu nán tiáo	it is difficult to cater for all tastes
众口一词	zhòng kǒu yī cí	with one voice; unanimously
众目睽睽	zhòng mù kuí kuí	the eyes of the masses are fixed on somebody or something
众人	zhòng rén	everybody
众望	zhòng wàng	people's expectations

*Example:*

他不负众望，得到冠军。

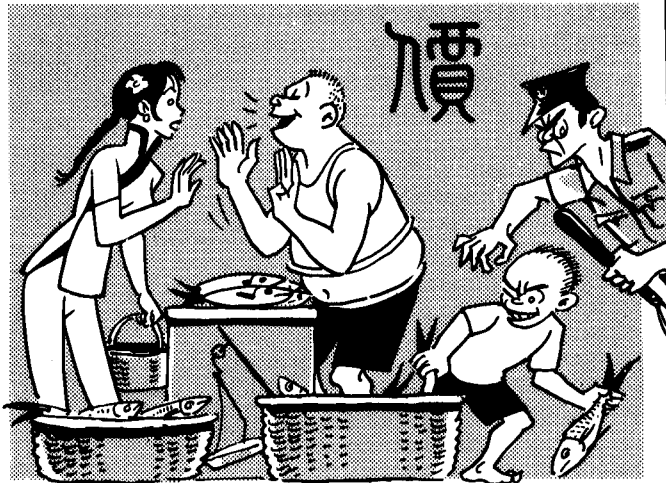
Tā bù fù zhòng wàng dé dào guān jūn

He had come up to the people's expectations when he won the championship.

# 价 (價)

JÌA price; value

The ideograph for price (價) is derived by putting 亻, man, the buyer against 賣, the seller. 賣, the seller, marks up the price to cover (賸) his goods with value in cowries (貝). Paradoxically, the highest price you can pay for anything is to get it for nothing.



丿 亻 亻 价 价

估价	gū jià	estimate the value of; evaluate
讲价	jiǎng jià	bargain
价格	jià gé	price
价目	jià mù	marked price
价值	jià zhí	value; worth
价值连城	jià zhí lián chéng	worth several cities – invaluable; priceless

### Example:

这些资料对我们很有价值。

Zhè xiè zī liào duì wǒ men hěn yǒu jià zhí

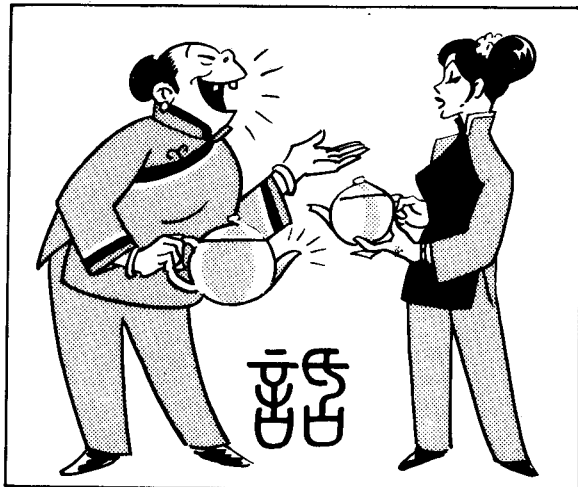
This data is of great value to us

# 话 (話)

HUA speech; words

話, meaning words or speech, is signified by words (言) of the tongue (舌).

講, meaning to speak or explain, is suggested by words (言) set in order (講), 講 being a graphic representation of the framework of a building. 講 is simplified to 讲. Sense is often linked with speech: "The full teapot makes no sound; the half-empty teapot makes much noise."



PEW

'	讠	讠	讠	讠	话	话								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

话别	huà bié	say a few parting words; say good-bye
话柄	huà bǐng	subject for ridicule
话旧	huà jiù	talk over old times; reminisce
话剧	huà jù	modern drama; stage play
话里有话	huà lǐ yǒu huà	the words mean more than they say
话题	huà tí	subject of a talk; topic of conversation
话筒	huà tǒng	microphone; telephone transmitter; megaphone
话头	huà tóu	thread of discourse

**Example:**

她喜欢看我演的话剧。

Tā xǔ huan kàn wǒ yǎn de huà jù

She likes the plays that I perform in.



去

QÙ

go; leave

去 is a pictograph of an empty vessel (凵) and its cover (土). The meaning "go" comes from the removal of the cover and contents of the vessel.

来, meaning "come", is a pictograph of growing wheat or barley, gratefully acknowledged as having come from the heavens above.



PENG

一 十 土 去 去

去处	qù chù	place to go; whereabouts
去粗取精	qù cū qǔ jīng	discard the dross and select the essential
去垢剂	qù gòu jì	detergent
去路	qù lù	the way along which one is going; outlet
去年	qù nián	last year
去世	qù shì	(of grown-up people) die; pass away
去污粉	qù wū fěn	household cleanser; cleanser
去向	qù xiàng	the direction in which somebody or something has gone

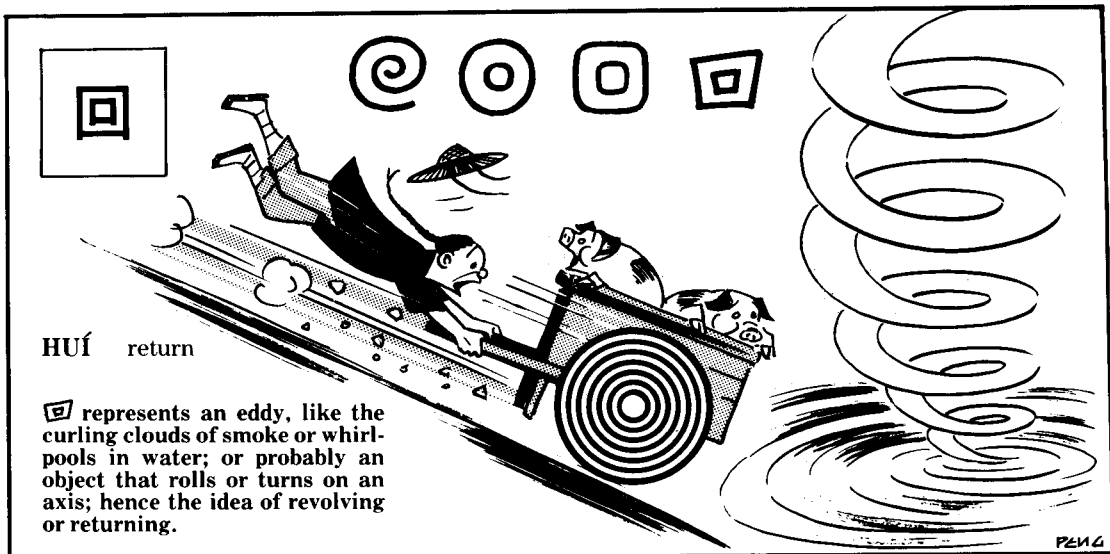
Example:

有谁知道他的去处？

Yǒu shuí zhī dào tā de qù chù

Who knows his where abouts?





HUÍ return

回 represents an eddy, like the curling clouds of smoke or whirlpools in water; or probably an object that rolls or turns on an axis; hence the idea of revolving or returning.



回避	huí bì	evade; dodge
回驳	huí bō	refute
回肠荡气	huí chāng dàng qì	(of music, poems, etc.) soulstirring; heartrending
回程	huí chéng	return trip
回答	huí dá	answer; reply; response
回顾	huí gù	look back; review

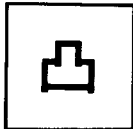
回击	huí jī	return fire; counterattack
回教	Huí jiào	Islam
回绝	huí jué	decline, refuse
回来	huí lái	return; be back
回头	huí tóu	turn round; repent; later
回想	huí xiǎng	think back; recollect

*Example:*

他马上就回来。

Tā mǎ shàng jiù huí lái

He'll be back in a minute.



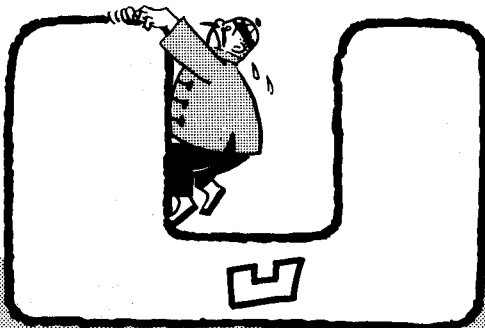
TŪ

convex;  
protruding

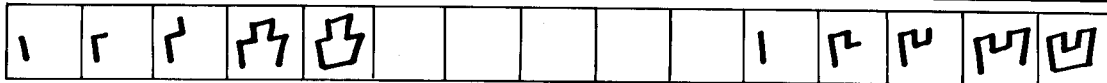


凸, to protrude, is graphically represented by the shape of this character.

凹, a hollow or dent, is another primitive character clearly indicated by its shape.



PEMA



凸版印刷 tū bǎn yìn shuā letterpress; relief or typographic printing

凸窗 tū chuāng bay window

凸轮 tū lún cam

凸面镜 tū miàn jìng convex mirror

凸透镜 tū tòu jìng convex lens

凹版印刷 āo bǎn yìn shuā intaglio or gravure printing

凹面镜 āo miàn jìng concave mirror

凹透镜 āo tòu jìng concave lens

凹凸印刷 āo tū yìn shuā embossing; die stamping

凹陷 āo xiàn hollow; depressed

*Example:*

这条路凹凸不平。

Zhè tiáo lù āo tū bù píng

This road is full of bumps and holes.

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