

— FUN WITH — **CHINESE CHARACTERS**

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



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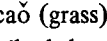
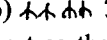


INTRODUCTION


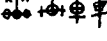







The genesis of the Chinese script is lengthy and remote. Very little of its history and origin is known to us as there is a lack of documentary evidence. Of the various legends concerning the creation of the Chinese script, the comparatively acceptable legend says that it was Cāng Jí 倉頡, a minister of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

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

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

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

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

There were numerous pictures which bore witness to the growth of civilization in ancient China. Take a look at the characters for tools and implements; for instance, dāo (knife)  刀, chē (cart, chariot)  車, zhǒu (broom)  帚, mǐng (bowl)  皿, hú (wine vessel)  壺, yú (spirit vessel)  盃, cè (document, book)  冊, yù (brush)  帚 and wǎng (net)  罔 (abbreviated as 四) and so on.

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

The methods of creating such ideographs were many: the drawing of a meaningful symbol, the addition of a sign to a pictograph, making parts stand for wholes, attributes for things, effects for causes, instruments for activities, gestures for actions, to mention just a few. In a nutshell, the abstract ideas were rendered in a metaphorical or symbolic way. For example, by drawing one line: —, two lines: =, three lines: ≡ or four lines: ≡ (this ideograph is no longer in use now) the early inventors meant yī (one), èr (two), sān (three) or sì (four) respectively. By adding a dot or a line onto the horizontal line: 一 二 上 (now 上) or below it: 一 二 下 (now 下), he meant shàng (up, above) or xià (down, below) respectively. Similarly, by adding a stroke to the top of the pictograph “木” tree (一 十 木 末 末 = 末 末 末), or to the lower part of it (一 十 木 木 = 木 木 木), he meant mò (top branches, end of a branch) or běn (root, trunk) respectively.

While a horizontal stroke stood for yī (one), a vertical stroke | was then taken to mean shí (ten). It was later corrupted into 十. A vertical line down the centre of a circle signified zhōng (centre, the middle) 中. A hand drawing a bow and arrow, needless to illuminate, meant shè (to shoot with a bow) 射. Similarly, to thrust at a person with a spear could but mean fá (to attack) 伐. A man with crossed legs symbolized the notion of jiāo (to cross, connection) 交; so did the picture of a standing man unmistakably represent the idea of lì (to stand) 立.

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

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

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

石 shí (stone)	+ 其 qí = 碁 qí (another variant of 棋 which was made of stone)
馬 mǎ (horse)	+ 其 qí = 騏 qí (a piebald horse)
鹿 lù (deer)	+ 其 qí = 麇 qí (a fabulous, auspicious animal)
鳥 niǎo (bird)	+ 其 qí = 鶖 qí (a kind of wild goose)
月 yuè (moon; time)	{ + 其 qí = 期 qí (a period of time; a fixed date; expect to)
欠 qiàn (owe; deficient)	+ 其 qí = 欺 qī (to cheat; to oppress)
心 xīn (heart)	+ 其 jì = 毒 jì (to poison; to hate)
土 tǔ (earth; land; ground)	+ 其 jī = 基 jī (foundation; base)
竹 zhú (bamboo; abbrev. 竹)	+ 其 jī = 箕 jī (a winnowing basket)
艸 cǎo (grass; abbrev. 艸 now 草)	{ + 其 jī = 萁 jī (a kind of grass)
示 shì (an omen; to manifest; abbrev. 示)	+ 其 qí = 祺 qí (fortunate; lucky)
糸 mì (the archaic form of 絲. silk)	+ 其 qí = 綦 qí (dark grey; superlative)
蟲 chóng (worm; abbrev. 虫)	+ 其 qí = 蟻 qí (part of the word 螞蟻 which is a kind of crab)
	+ 其 qí, jī or jì =

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

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

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

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

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

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

Huì Yì, Associative Compound

rì + yuè = míng

Xíng Shēng, Determinative-Phonetic Character

mù + qí = qí

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

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

scribers did a very easy and convenient task by borrowing the existent character 來 lái for the representation of the word lái “to come”. Similarly, the pictograph 萬 wàn “scorpion” was borrowed to represent the word wàn “ten thousand”. 其 qí “a winnowing basket” was borrowed to represent the word qí meaning “his”, “her”, “its”, “their”, “this” and “that”. A very interesting example is the word xī “west”, represented by this picture character 西 xī which originally meant that the bird was in the nest. Xǔ Shèn’s reason for such a loan was that the bird rested in its nest at a time when the sun was setting in the west. It had therefore been borrowed to render the word xī “west”. All these transferences occurred because they were homophones.

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

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

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

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

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

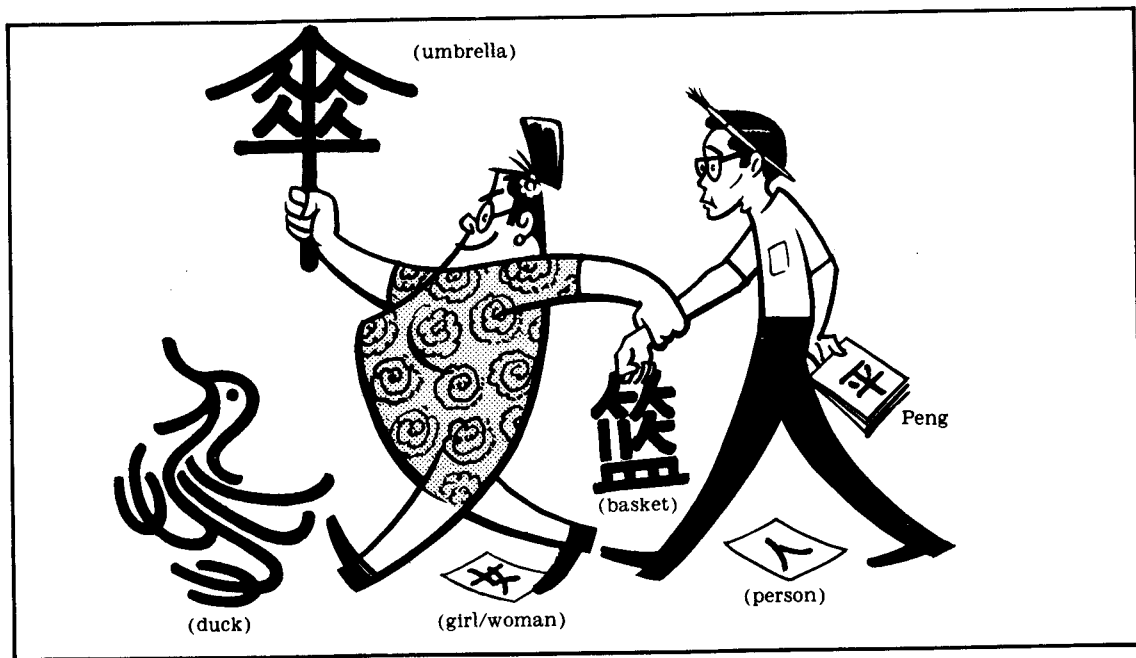
4. **The Contemporary Stage (or the Modern Period):**

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

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

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

Dr Ong Tee Wah
18 January 1980



PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Have fun, then, with Chinese characters!

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| 19 小 xiǎo | 45 也 yě | 71 身 shēn | 97 云 yún |
| 20 少 shǎo or shào | 46 他 tā | 72 自 zì | 98 雪 xuě |
| 21 尖 jiān | 47 目 mù | 73 齿 chǐ | 99 电 diàn |
| 22 田 tián | 48 见 jiàn | 74 止 zhǐ | 100 雷 léi |
| 23 力 lì | 49 看 kàn | 75 足 zú | 101 伞 sǎn |
| 24 男 nán | 50 口 kǒu | 76 疋 pǐ | 102 川 chuān |
| 25 日 rì | 51 言 yán | 77 步 bù | 103 山 shān |
| 26 月 yuè | 52 信 xìn | 78 正 zhèng | 104 鸟 niǎo |

105	岛	dǎo	123	谈	tán	141	禾	hé	159	胖	pàng
106	乌	wū	124	灰	huī	142	秋	qiū	160	有	yǒu
107	飞	fēi	125	灾	zāi	143	愁	chóu	161	来	lái
108	羽	yǔ	126	煽	shān	144	税	shuì	162	本	běn
109	习	xí	127	烧	shāo	145	秃	tū	163	体	tǐ
110	扇	shàn	128	黑	hēi	146	苏	sū	164	果	guǒ
111	鱼	yú	129	墨	mò	147	和	hé	165	课	kè
112	渔	yú	130	点	diǎn	148	年	nián	166	巢	cháo
113	鲁	lǔ	131	草	cǎo	149	甘	gān	167	末	mò
114	羊	yáng	132	苗	miáo	150	香	xiāng	168	未	wèi
115	鲜	xiān	133	叶	yè	151	牛	niú	169	妹	mèi
116	羔	gāo	134	花	huā	152	件	jiàn	170	姐	jiě
117	美	měi	135	茶	chá	153	牢	láo	171	爱	ài
118	义	yì	136	英	yīng	154	半	bàn	172	想	xiǎng
119	洋	yáng	137	竹	zhú	155	伴	bàn	173	忆	yì
120	羨	xiàn	138	笔	bǐ	156	告	gào	174	忘	wàng
121	火	huǒ	139	算	suàn	157	牧	mù	175	快	kuài
122	炎	yán	140	笑	xiào	158	肉	roù	176	匆	cōng

女

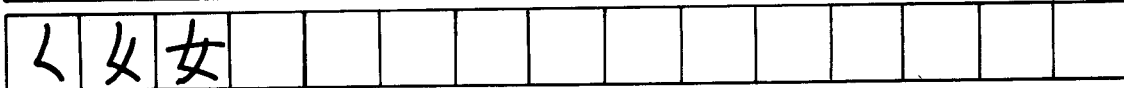
nǚ

woman;
girl;
daughter

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



FENG



女儿
女工
女皇
女人
女士
女王
女性

nǚ ér
nǚ gōng
nǚ huáng
nǚ rén
nǚ shì
nǚ wáng
nǚ xìng

daughter
woman worker
empress
woman
lady
queen
the female

女婿
女子
女朋友
女主角
女主人
妇女
子女

nǚ xù
nǚ zǐ
nǚ péng yǒu
nǚ zhǔ jué
nǚ zhǔ rén
fù nǚ
zǐ nǚ

son-in-law
girl or woman
girl friend
female lead
hostess
woman
children

Example:

我们的工厂有很多女工。

Wǒ mén de gōng chǎng yǒu hěn duō nǚ gōng.

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

子

zǐ

infant;
child;
son

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



PE114



子弹
子弟
子女
子孙

zǐ dàn
zǐ dì
zǐ nǚ
zǐ sūn

bullet
young generations
children
descendants

子夜
子音
子子孙孙
孩子

zǐ yè
zǐ yīn
zǐ zǐ sūn sūn
hái zǐ

midnight
consonant
descendants
child

Example:

这个孩子很聪明。

Zhè gè hái zǐ hěn cōng míng.

It means, "This child is very intelligent."

好

Hǎo

good;
right;
excellent

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



PENG

人 女 女 如 好 好

好吃
好处
好感
好汉
好久
好看
好听
好象

hǎo chī
hǎo chù
hǎo gǎn
hǎo hàn
hǎo jiǔ
hǎo kàn
hǎo tīng
hǎo xiàng

delicious
benefit; advantage
good impression
worthy man
a long time
good looking
pleasant to the ear
look alike

好笑
好心
好意
好在

好转
好人好事

hǎo xiào
hǎo xīn
hǎo yì
hǎo zài

hǎo zhuǎn
hǎo rén hǎo shì

funny
kind-hearted
well-intentioned
fortunately; thanks
to
turn for the better
good personalities
and good deeds

Example:

这首歌很好听。

Zhè shǒu gē hěn hǎo tīng.

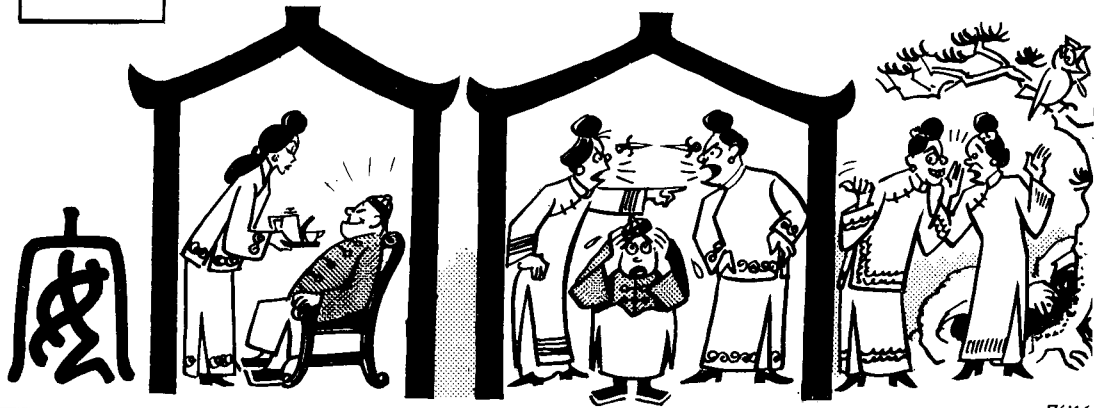
It means, "This song is very pleasant to the ear."

安

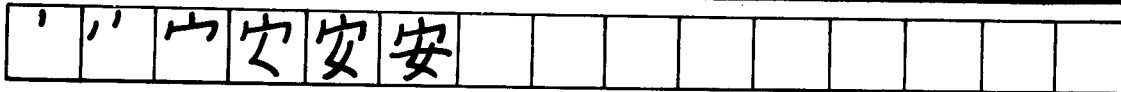
ĀN

peace;
contentment

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



FENG



安定	ān dìng	stable	安慰	ān wèi	comfort; console
安静	ān jìng	serene; quiet or peaceful	安心	ān xīn	feel at ease; free from worries
安乐	ān lè	peace and happiness	安装	ān zhuāng	install; assemble
安眠	ān mián	sleep peacefully	安分守己	ān fèn shǒu jǐ	law abiding; be contented with one's lot
安宁	ān níng	peaceful; free from troubles	安居乐业	ān jū lè yè	live and work in contentment
安排	ān pái	arrange	不安	bù ān	uneasy; worried
安全	ān quán	safe; secure			

Example:

用行人天桥过路最安全。

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

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

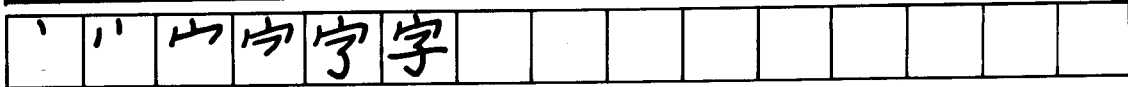
字

zì

written
character

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

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



字典
字号
字迹
字据
字句

zì diǎn
zì hào
zì jī
zì jù
zì jù

dictionary
name of shop
handwriting
written receipt
words and
expressions

字母

zì mǔ

letter of an
alphabet

字幕

zì mù

subtitle

字体

zì tǐ

style of
calligraphy

字里行间

zì lǐ háng jiān

between the lines

写字

xiě zì

writing (words)

Example:

他的字体很美。

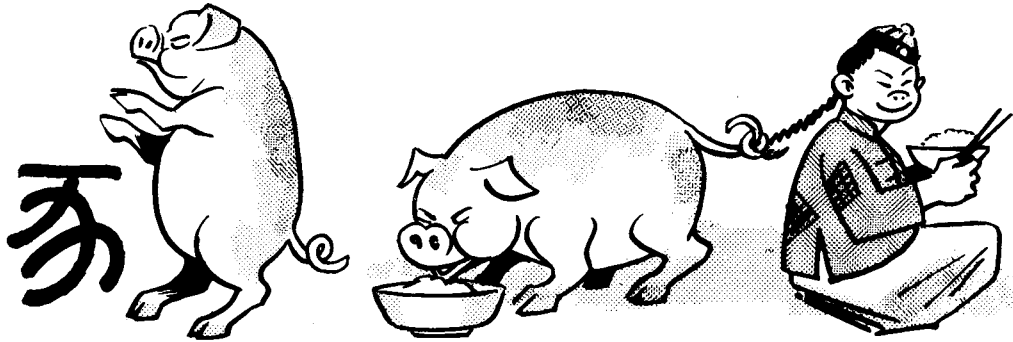
Tā de zì tǐ hěn měi.

It means, "His handwriting is very beautiful."

豕

shǐ
pig

In this pictograph of pig the head is replaced by a line (一). On the left are the belly and paws (彡) and on the right the back and tail (乚). The domestic pig might well symbolise prosperity to man, so closely knit and tied together were their lives. This interdependence probably gave rise to the proverbial saying: "The schoolmaster should not leave his books, nor the poor man his pig."



P2114

一 丿 彡 彡 彡 豕 豕

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

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

Example:

回教徒不能吃猪肉。

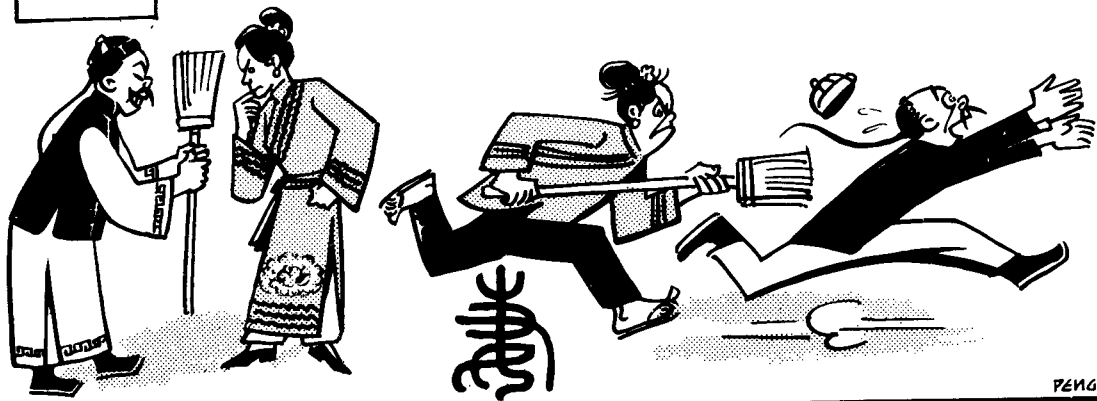
Huí jiào tú bù néng chī zhū ròu.

It means, "Muslims cannot eat pork."

妻

qī
wife

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



PENG

一	彡	ㄣ	彡	事	妻	妻	妻						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

妻舅
妻室
妻子

qī jiù
qī shì
qī zǐ

brother-in-law
legal wife
wife

妻离子散
贤妻

qī lí zǐ sàn
xián qī

broken up
family
good wife

Example:

他有一个美丽的妻子。

Tā yǒu yī gè měi lì de qī zǐ.

It means, "He has a pretty wife."

木

mù
tree;
wood

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



PE114

一 十 才 木

木板

mù bǎn

wooden plank or board

木材

mù cái

timber

木筏

mù fá

wooden raft

木工

mù gōng

carpentry

木瓜

mù guā

papaya

木屐

mù jī

clogs

木匠

mù jiàng

carpenter

木刻

mù kè

wood carving

木料

mù liào

timber; lumber

木偶戏

mù'ǒu xì

puppet show

木炭

mù tàn

charcoal

木头

mù tóu

wooden block; wood

木星

Mù Xīng

Jupiter

木乃伊

mù nǎi yī

mummy

木已成舟

mù yǐ chéng zhōu

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

麻木

má mù

numb

Example:

小英喜欢看木偶戏。

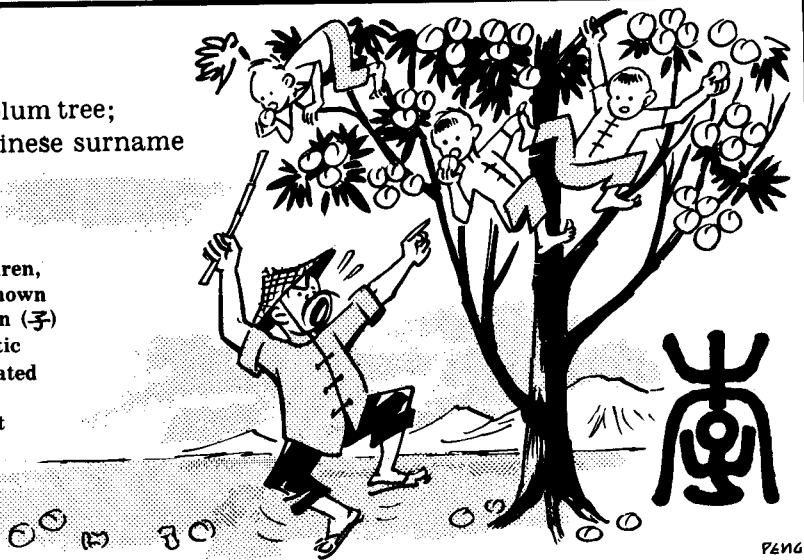
Xiǎo Yīng xǐ huān kàn mù'ǒu xì.

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

李

lǐ
plum or plum tree;
also a Chinese surname

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



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

李树	lǐ shù	plum tree
李子	lǐ zi	plum
行李	xíng li	baggage; luggage
行李箱	xíng li xiāng	trunk

Example:

去旅行，最好不要带太多行李。

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

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

栖 (棲)

qī

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

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



一	丨	才	才	木	木	栖	栖	栖				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

栖身 qī shēn

dwell; obtain
shelter

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

qī xī

rest

栖宿 qī sù

rest for the night

qī shēn zhī suǒ
liǎng qī dòng wù

dwelling-place
amphibians

Example:

新加坡并不乏栖身之所。

Xīn Jiā Pō bìng bù quē qī shēn zhī suǒ.

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



rén

man;
person;
human

Man's pictographic profile presents an insight into his evolutionary development. Created from earth and equipped with hands and feet, lowly man eked out an existence from the ground with his hands 3 to help him stand on his feet 3. Discarding both hands and feet, he used only his head 3. Today, in the race of the survival of the fittest, he loses his head completely 1 and finds himself barely able to keep his feet.



PEM6



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

Example:

在裕廊飞禽公园有一个人工瀑布。

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

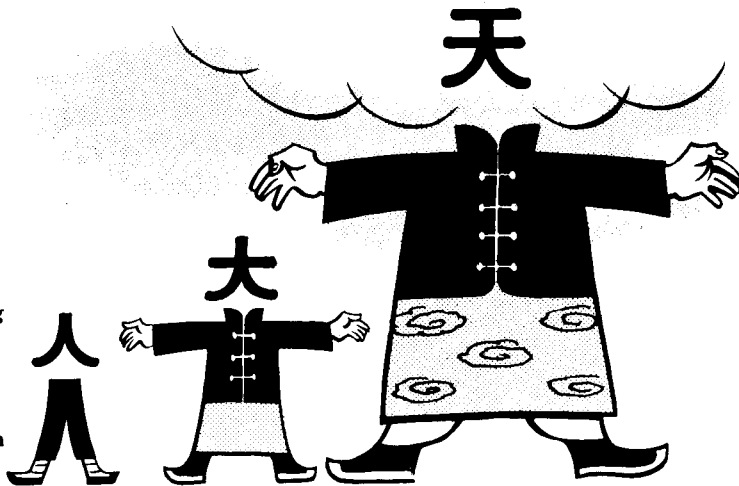
It means, "There is a man-made waterfall in Jurong Bird Park."

天

tiān

heaven;
sky;
day

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



PEN 4

一 二 于 天

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

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

Example:

明天我要去日本。

Míng tiān wǒ yào qù Rì·Běn.

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

夫

fū

husband;
distinguished
person

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

夫
夫
夫

P2114

一 二 夫 夫

农夫
懦夫
渔夫
丈夫

nóng fū
nuò fū
yú fū
zhàng fū

farmer
coward
fisherman
husband

夫妇
夫妻
夫人
大夫

fū fù
fū qī
fū rén
dài fū

husband and wife
husband and wife
wife; madam
medical doctor

Example:

小兰的丈夫是个农夫。

Xiǎo-lán de zhàng fū shì gè nóng fū.

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

太

tài

too;
over;
excessive

By underscoring "big" (大) with a line (一) man came up with a superlative character (太) meaning too much or over the limit. In the ecstasy of double happiness and the rapture of marital bliss that followed, man bestowed upon his wife a flattering title: 太太 a double emphasis. As shown below, she took him seriously and lived up to it. Man thereafter reduced the underline to a teeny-weeny stroke 太

太太太太



FENG

一 十 大 太

太多
太后
太监
太空
太平
太太
太阳
太子

tài duō
tài hòu
tài jiàn
tài kōng
tài píng
tài tài
tài yáng
tài zǐ

too many
empress dowager
eunuch
outer space; sky
peace
madam
sun
prince

太极拳

太空船
太空人
太平门

太平洋
太阳能

tài jí quán

tài kōng chuán
tài kōng rén
tài píng mén

Tài Píng Yáng
tài yáng néng

kind of traditional
Chinese martial
art
spaceship
spaceman
emergency exit;
safety exit
Pacific Ocean
solar energy

Example:

太空人已在月球登陆。

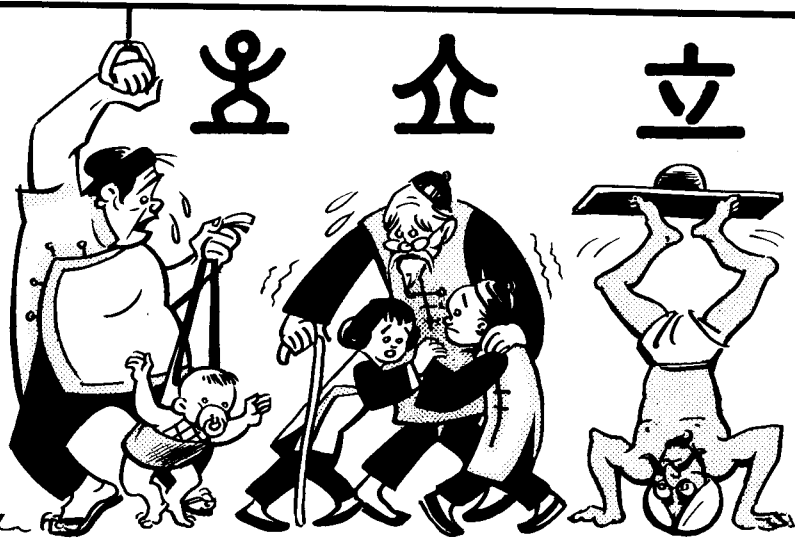
Tài kōng rén yǐ zài yuè qiú dēng lù.

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

立

lì
stand;
rise up

This character, meaning plain standing or rising up, portrays a person standing – not in the abstract, but on firm, stable ground (一). Originally written 立, it was modified to 企 and finally to 立. Illustrated here are some human characters, firm and infirm, trying to stand on stable ground and demonstrating that plain standing is not plain sailing.



FENG

、 一 六 立 立

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

Example:

我们在花园里建立起一座纪念碑。

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

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

小

xiǎo

small;
petty;
young

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



小

small



大

big

P&M 4

丨 小 小

小吃	xiǎo chī	snacks
小丑	xiǎo chǒu	clown
小岛	xiǎo dǎo	small island; islet
小姐	xiǎo jiě	lady; Miss
小麦	xiǎo mài	wheat
小声	xiǎo shēng	low voice; whisper
小时	xiǎo shí	hour

小偷	xiǎo tōu	thief
小心	xiǎo xīn	careful; cautious
小型	xiǎo xíng	small scale
小学	xiǎo xué	primary school
小组	xiǎo zǔ	small team or group
小题大作	xiǎo tí dà zuò	make a mountain out of a molehill

Example:

我喜欢巴金的小说。

Wǒ xǐ huān Bā-jīn de xiǎo shuō.

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

少

shǎo

less; few;
short of

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



大 小 少

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

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

Example:

这位少女真美丽。

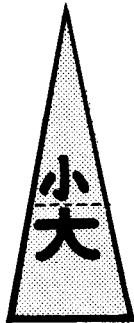
Zhè wèi shào nǚ zhēn měi lì.

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

尖

jiān

pointed;
sharp



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



PENG

小 小 尖 尖

尖兵
尖刀
尖顶
尖端

jiān bīng
jiān dāo
jiān dǐng
jiān duān

vanguard
sharp knife
peak; apex
highest point

尖刻
尖利
尖锐
尖塔

jiān kè
jiān lì
jiān ruì
jiān tǎ

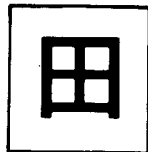
trenchant (of
words; speech)
sharp
sharp; pointed
spire

Example:

这是一把尖锐的刀。

Zhè shì yī bǎ jiān ruì de dāo.

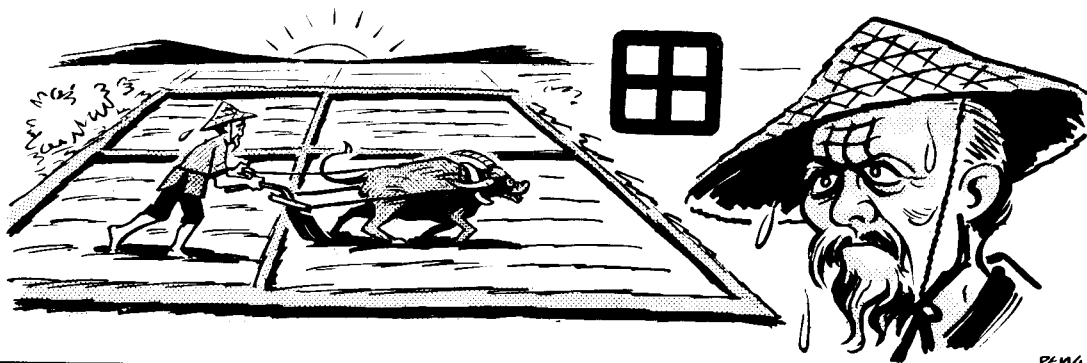
It means, "This is a sharp knife."



tián

rice field;
grain field

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



田地	tián dì	field or situation (of something)
田鸡	tián jī	frog
田径	tián jìng	track and field
田野	tián yě	open country

田园	tián yuán	fields and gardens
田径赛	tián jìng sài	athletic competition
耕田	gēng tián	plough

Example:

一年一度的田径赛又将来临了。

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

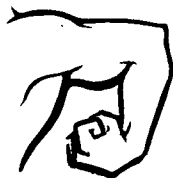
It means, "The annual athletic competition is round the corner again."

力

lì
strength;
force;
power

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

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



FENG



力量 lì liàng

physical strength;
force

力不从心 lì bù cóng xīn

ability falling
short of one's
wishes

力气 lì qì

effort; strength

力求进步 lì qiú jìn bù

struggle for
improvement

力求 lì qiú

strive; make
every effort

力争上游 lì zhēng shàng yóu

aim high

力争 lì zhēng

endeavour; fight
for

人力 rén lì

labour force;
manpower

Example:

团结就是力量。

Tuán jié jiù shì lì liàng.

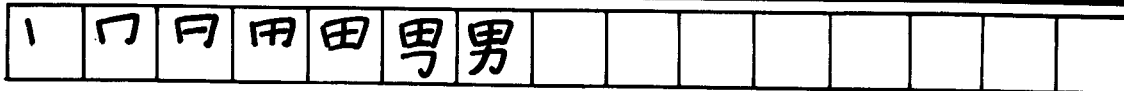
It means, "Unity is strength."

男

nán

man;
male;
masculine

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



男孩
男女
男人
男声
男性
男装

nán hái

nán nǚ

nán rén

nán shēng

nán xìng

nán zhuāng

boy

men and women

man

male voice

male

male attire

男子

男朋友

男子汉

男男女女

男女平等

nán zǐ

nán péng yǒu

nán zǐ hàn

nán nǚ nǚ nǚ

nán nǚ píng děng

man; male

boy friend

man; hero

men and women

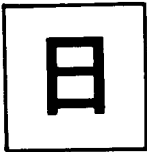
equality of men
and women

Example:

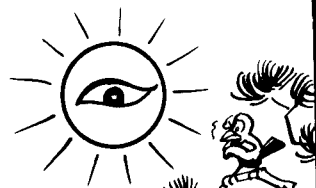
很多好厨师都是男性。

Hěn duō hǎo chú shī dōu shì nán xìng.

It means, "Many good chefs are males."



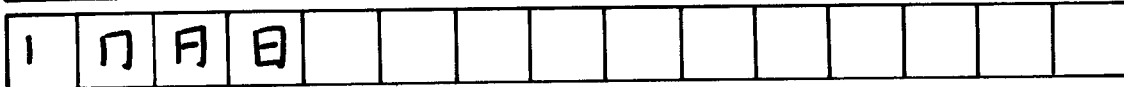
rì

sun;
day

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



PENIG



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

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

Example:

我明天要上山顶看日出。

Wǒ míng tiān yào shàng shān dǐng kàn rì chū.

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

月

yuè

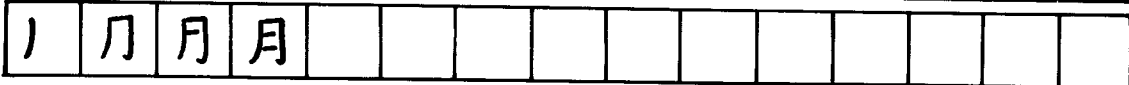
moon;
month

D D 月 月

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



PENG



月饼
月份
月光
月经
月刊

yuè bǐng

yuè fèn

yuè guāng

yuè jīng

yuè kān

月亮
月票
月球

yuè liang

yuè piào

yuè qiú

mooncake

month

moonlight

menstruation

monthly
publication

moon

monthly ticket

the moon

月色
月蚀

yuè sè

yuè shí (shì)

月薪
月夜

yuè xīn

yuè yè

月下老人
尝月

yuè xià lǎo rén

shǎng yuè

moonlight

eclipse of the
moon

monthly salary

moonlit night

matchmaker

enjoy the
moonlight

Example:

我们一面尝月，一面吃月饼。

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

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

明

míng

brilliant;
bright;
enlightened

Man combined the sun (日) and the moon (月) to produce an ideograph for bright, brilliant or enlightened. He called it: "ming" (明) and used it also for the brilliant Ming Dynasty of China which came in the wake of the Dark Ages of Europe. Today science and technology has ushered in the dazzling Space Age — with man very much enlightened and the future very much darkened.



PENGL

丨 丩 月 日 明 明明明

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

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

Example:

我明白你的意思。

Wǒ míng bái nǐ de yì sī.

It means, "I understand what you mean."

白

bái

clear;
white;
plain

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



明
白



PENG

' 丿 白 白 白

白菜	bái cài	Chinese cabbage	白茫茫	bái māng māng	an endless whiteness
白费	bái fèi	in vain; waste	白日梦	bái rì mèng	daydream
白宫	Bái Gōng	The White House (official residence of the president of America)	白血球	bái xuè qiú	white corpuscle
			白手起家	bái shǒu qǐ jiā	start from scratch; build up from nothing
白喉	bái hóu	diphtheria	坦白	tǎn bái	frank
白色	bái sè	white colour	真象大白	zhēn xiàng dà bái	matter that is finally made clear
白糖	bái táng	white sugar			
白兔	bái tù	white rabbit			

Example:

他对我很坦白。

Tā duì wǒ hěn tǎn bái.

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



dàn

dawn;
daybreak

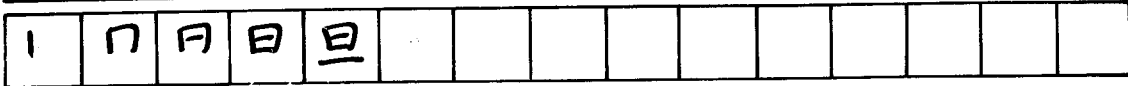
旦 旦 旦

z z z z z z

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



PENG



旦暮

dàn mù

morning and evening

花旦

huā dàn

prima dona in an opera

旦夕

dàn xī

in a short while

元旦

yuán dàn

New Year's Day

旦夕之间

dàn xī zhī jiān

within a single day

一旦

yī dàn

once; as soon as

Example:

元旦是公共假期。

Yuan dan shì gōng gòng jià qī.

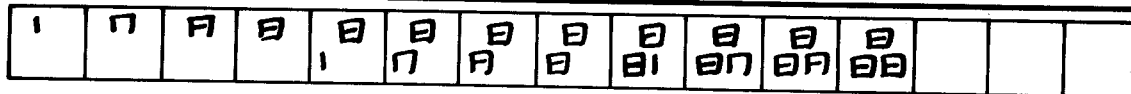
It means, "New Year's Day is a public holiday."



jīng

crystal;
brilliant;
sparkling

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



晶体
晶莹
晶体管
结晶

jīng tǐ
jīng yíng
jīng tǐ guǎn
jié jīng

crystal
lustrous; brilliant
transistor
result; product;
crystallization

亮晶晶
水晶

liàng jīng jīng
shuǐ jīng

shining
crystalline

Example:

这本书是他多年研究的结晶。

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

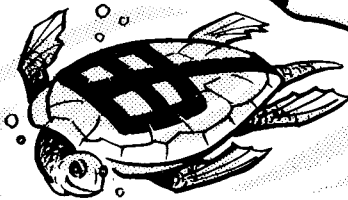
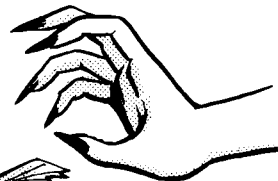
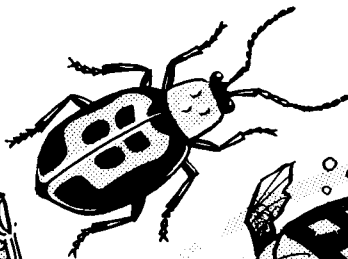
It means, "This book is the result of his many years of research."

甲

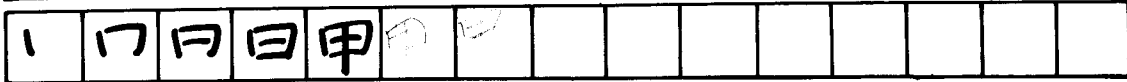
jiǎ
first;
armour or
protective
covering

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

十
田
𠄎
冃
甲



FZ114



甲板
甲虫
甲等

甲克
甲壳

jiǎ bǎn
jiǎ chóng
jiǎ děng

jiǎ kè
jiǎ qiào

deck of a ship
beetle
first class or first
grade
jacket
crust

甲鱼
甲骨文

甲状腺
装甲兵

jiǎ yú
jiǎ gǔ wén

jiǎ zhuàng xiàn
zhuāng jiǎ bīng

soft-shelled turtle
inscriptions on
oracle bones
thyroid gland -
armoured corps

Example:

有许多人在甲板上作日光浴。

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

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

早

zǎo

early;
morning

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



早
早
早



PENG

丨	冂	冂	日	旦	早												
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

早安
早班
早餐
早操
早晨
早春
早婚

zǎo ān
zǎo bān
zǎo cān
zǎo cāo
zǎo chén
zǎo chūn
zǎo hūn

good morning
morning shift
breakfast
morning exercise
early morning
early spring
marrying too early

早年
早期
早日
早上
早晚

zǎo nián
zǎo qī
zǎo rì
zǎo shàng
zǎo wǎn

one's early life
early stage
at an early date
(early) morning
morning and evening

Example:

请早日答覆。

Qǐng zǎo rì dá fù.

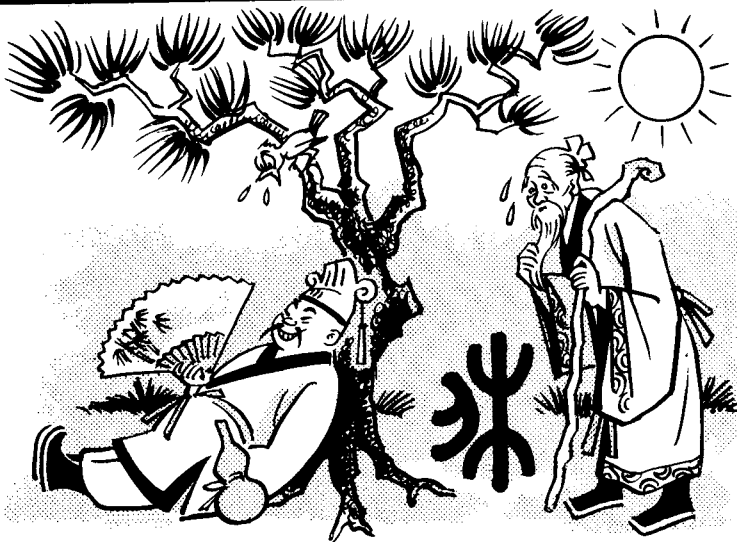
It means, "Please reply as soon as possible."

休

xiū

rest;
cease

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



PEMLC

ノ	亻	木	休							
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

休会
休假
休息
休闲
休想
休学

xiū huì
xiū jià
xiū xi
xiū xián
xiū xiǎng
xiū xué

adjourn (meeting)
on leave
rest or relax
lie fallow (land)
don't expect
suspend one's
schooling without
losing one's status
as a student

休养
休业
休战
休整
休止

xiū yǎng
xiū yè
xiū zhàn
xiū zhěng
xiū zhǐ

recuperate or
convalesce
wind up (business)
ceasefire
rest and reorganize
cease or stop

Example:

他在医院里休养。

Tā zài yī yuàn lǐ xiū yǎng.

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

东 (東) dōng east

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

日 + 木 = 東 = 東



FZ114

一	七	车	东	东															
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

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

Example:

太阳由东方升上来。

Tài yáng yóu dōng fāng shēng shàng lái.

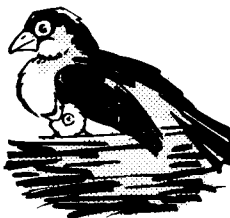
It means, "The sun rises in the east."

西

xī

west

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



FENG

一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十	西								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

西边
西餐
西方
西瓜
西湖

西南
西欧

xī bian
xī cān
xī fāng
xī guā
xī hú

xī nán
xī ōu

west side
Western-style food
the West
watermelon
West Lake in
Hangzhou
southwest
Western Europe

西洋
西医

西藏
西装
西半球
西班牙
西伯利亚

Xī Yáng
xī yī

Xī Zàng
xī zhuāng
xī bàn qiú
Xī Bān Yá
Xī Bó Lì Yà

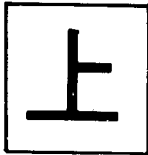
the West
a doctor trained in
Western medicine
Tibet
Western dress
western hemisphere
Spain
Siberia

Example:

西瓜有许多种子。

xī guā yǒu xǔ duō zhǒng zǐ.

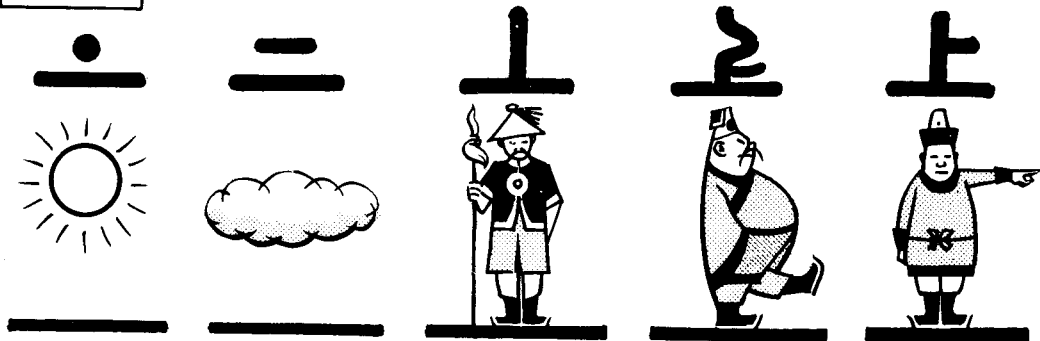
It means, "A watermelon has many seeds."



shàng

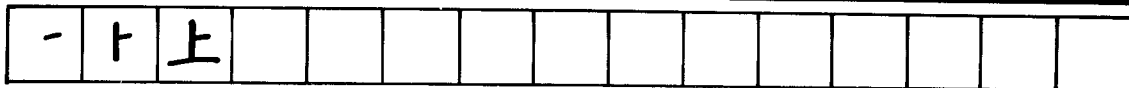
up;
above;
ascend

Since up and down, above and below are relative and abstract terms, man conveyed the ideas graphically by relating a simple stroke to a horizontal foundation line (—). This stroke above the base line was originally a dot: 丶 extended to a line: 二, propped upright: 上, embellished: 𠂔 and finally stabilized: 上.



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

FZUG



上班
上辈
上宾

shàng bān
shàng bèi
shàng bīn

go to work
one's elders
distinguished guest;
guest of honour

上苍
上策
上层
上场

shàng cāng
shàng cè
shàng céng
shàng chǎng

Heaven; God
the best plan
upper strata
appear on the
stage

上床

shàng chuáng

go to bed

上代
上当
上等
上帝
上级
上课
上空

shàng dài
shàng dàng
shàng děng
shàng dì
shàng jí
shàng kè
shàng kōng

former generations

cheated

first-class

God

higher authority

attend class

in the sky;
overhead

上游

shàng yóu

upper stream

Example:

她上班去了。

Tā shàng bān qù le.

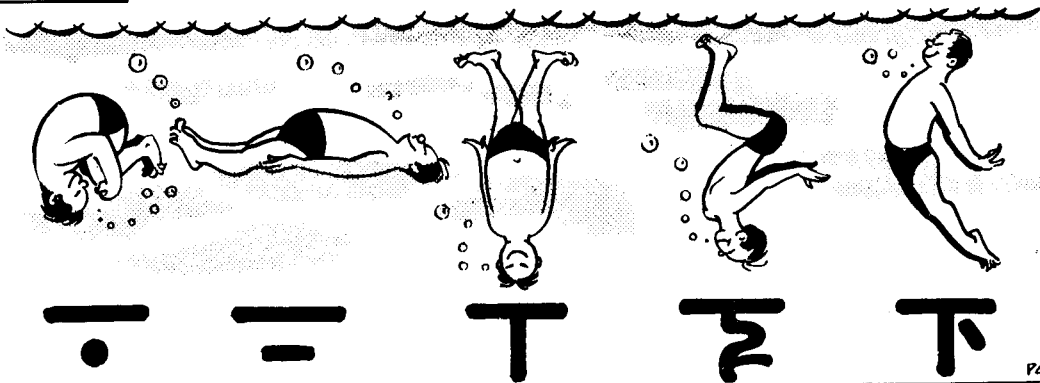
It means, "She's gone to work."

下

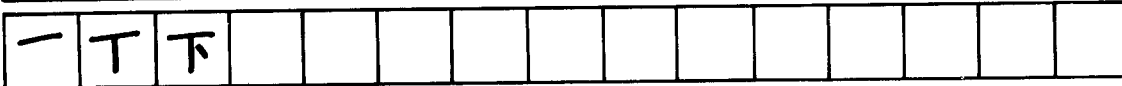
xià

down;
below;
descend

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



PEN 4



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

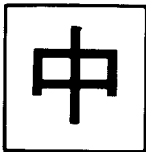
下级	xià jí	lower level
下贱	xià jiàn	mean; degrading
下降	xià jiàng	descend
下课	xià kè	class is over
下来	xià lái	come down
下令	xià lìng	instruct; order
下流	xià liú	despicable
下落	xià luò	whereabouts

Example:

他下午要去看戏。

Tā xià wǔ yào qù kàn xì.

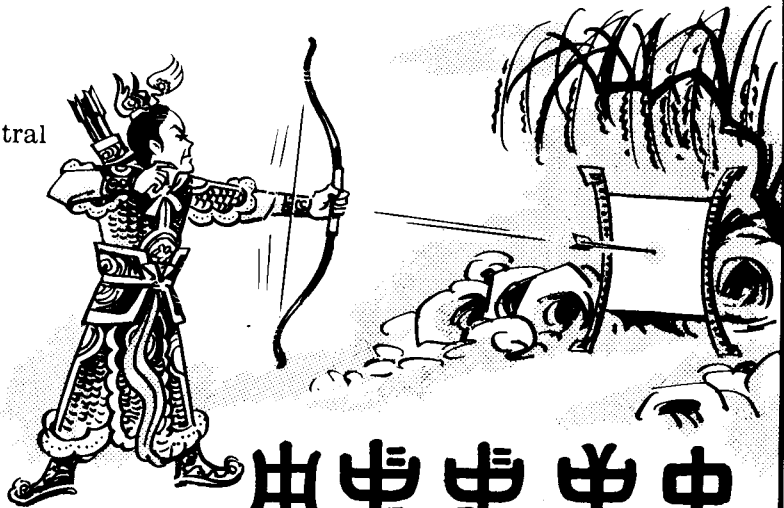
It means, "He is going for a show in the afternoon."



zhōng

centre;
middle;neutral

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



中 中 中 中 中

PEW

丨	冂	口	中																
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

Example:

他出身中等家庭。
Tā chū shēn zhōng děng jiā tíng.

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

奴

nú

slave;
servant

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



PE VI 4

亻 女 女 奴 奴

奴婢
奴才
奴化
奴隶
奴仆

nú bī
nú cai
nú huà
nú lì
nú pú

female slave
flunkey; lackey
enslave
slave
male slave

奴性

nú xìng

servile
disposition

奴役

nú yì

slavery

奴隶制度

nú lì zhì dù

slave system

Example:

奴隶制度已废除。

Nú lì zhì dù yǐ fèi chú.

It means, “Slavery has already been abolished.”

友

yǒu
friend

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



攴



攴攴



友



友

FENG

一	ナ	方	友																
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

友爱
友邦
友好
友情

yǒu ài
yǒu bāng
yǒu hǎo
yǒu qíng

friendly affection
friendly nation
friendly
friendship

友人
友善
友谊
友好协定

yǒu rén
yǒu shàn
yǒu yì
yǒu hǎo xié dìng

friend
friendly
friendship
friendship pact

Example:

他是我的好朋友。

Tā shì wǒ de hǎo péng yǒu.

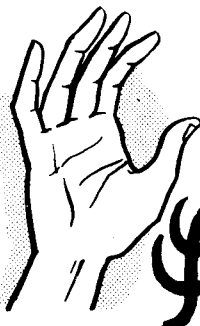
It means, "He is my good friend."



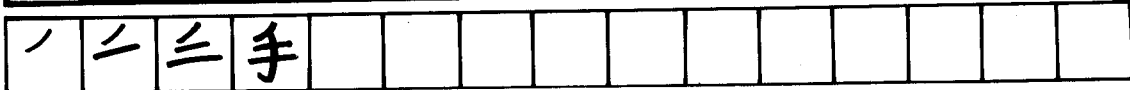
shǒu

hand

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



FENG



手臂
手笔

shǒu bì
shǒu bǐ

arm
somebody's own
handwriting or
painting

手表
手册
手段
手法
手工

shǒu biǎo
shǒu cè
shǒu duàn
shǒu fǎ
shǒu gōng

wrist-watch
handbook
means; measure
skill; tricks
handwork

手巾
手铐
手枪
手术
手书
手套
手电筒
手榴弹

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

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

Example:

我有一双手。

Wǒ yǒu yī shuāng shǒu.

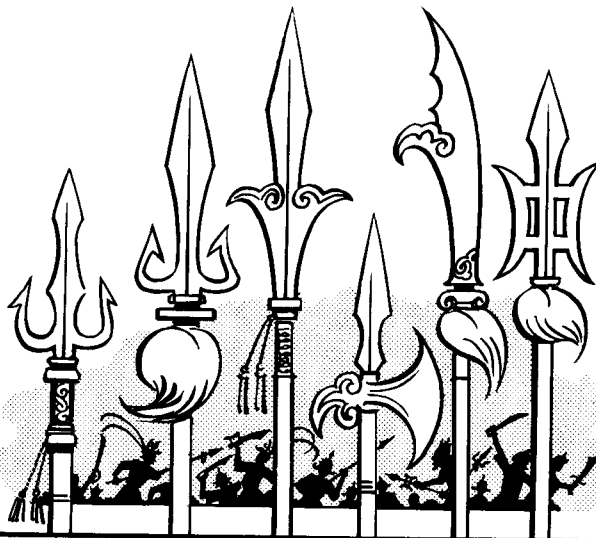
It means, "I have a pair of hands."

戈

gē

spear; lance

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



戈

PEW

一 七 戈 戈

戈壁

Gēbǐ

the Gobi Desert

干戈

gān gē

weapons; war

倒戈相向

dǎo gē xiāng
xiàng

betray one's own
party

Example:

化干戈为玉帛。

Huà gān gē wéi yù bó.

It means, "Stop war and make peace."

我

wǒ

I; me

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



43

FENG

'	一	手	我	我	我						
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

Example:

大家你帮我，我帮你很快就把活儿干完了。

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

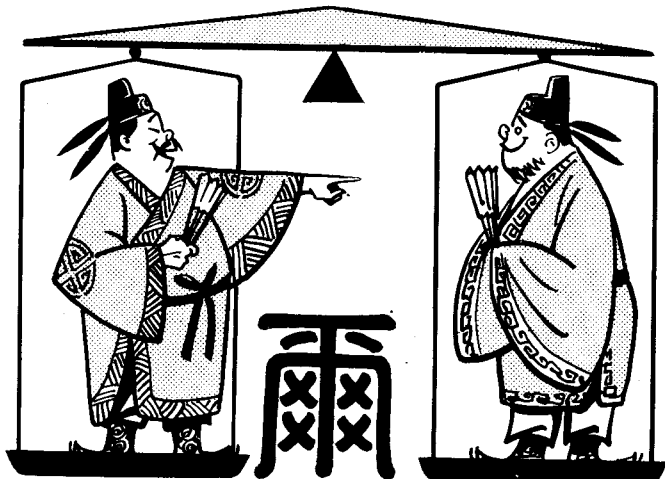
It means, "With each one giving the other a helping hand, they soon got the job done."

你

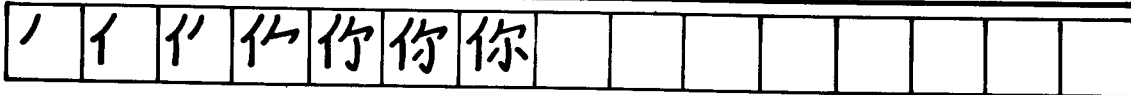
nǐ

you

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



PEWU



你好	nǐ hǎo	how do you do
你们	nǐ men	you (plural)
你们的	nǐ men de	your; yours (plural)
你死我活	nǐ sǐ wǒ huó	life and death struggle

你追我赶	nǐ zhuī wǒ gǎn	try to overtake each other in friendly emulation
------	----------------	--

Example:

你好吗？

Nǐ hǎo mā?

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

也

yě

also;
in addition to

也 也 也 也

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



FENG

一 力 也

也罢
也好
也行
也许
也有

yě bà
yě hǎo
yě xíng
yě xǔ
yě yǒu

let it be
may as well
all right
perhaps
also have

Example:

他也许会来。

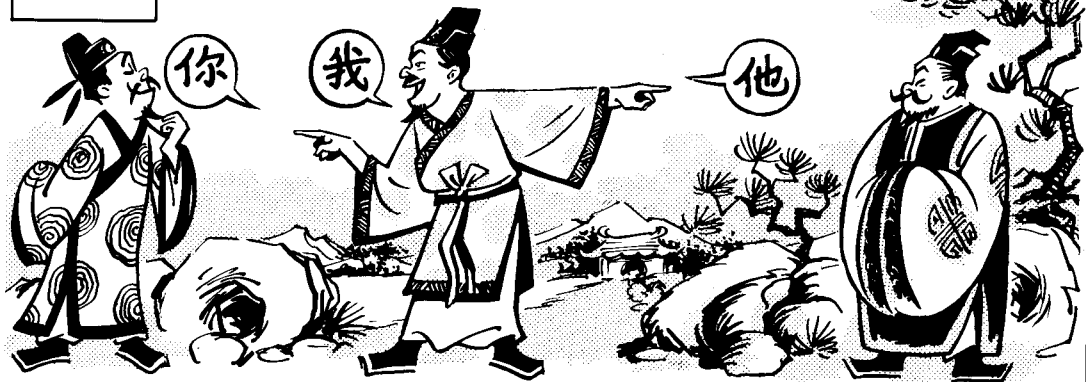
Tā yě xǔ huì lái.

It means, "Perhaps he may come."

他

tā
he; she

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



PENG

丨	亻	亻	他																
---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

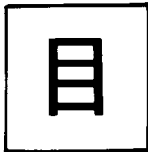
他日	tā rì	some other day
他乡	tā xiāng	place far away from home
他自己	tā zì jǐ	himself

Example:

他是一个渔夫。

Tā shì yī gè yú fū.

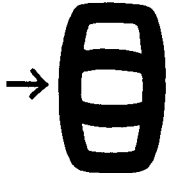
It means, "He is a fisherman."



mù

eye

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



FZML



目标	mù biāo	aim
目的	mù dì	purpose; aim; goal
目睹	mù dǔ	witness; see for oneself
目光	mù guāng	sight; vision; view
目见	mù jiàn	see for oneself
目力	mù lì	eyesight
目录	mù lù	contents page or index (of book); catalogue

目前	mù qián	at present
目送	mù sòng	watch somebody go
目下	mù xià	now; at present
目不转睛	mù bù zhuǎn jīng	stare
目瞪口呆	mù dèng kǒu dāi	stunned
目空一切	mù kōng yī qiè	supercilious
目中无人	mù zhōng wú rén	look down on others; be overweening

Example:

我目前还不想结婚。

Wǒ mù qián hái bù xiǎng jié hūn.

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

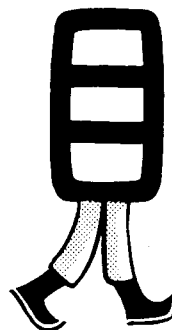
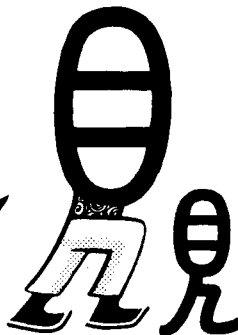
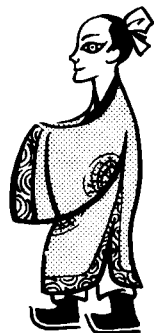
见

(見)

jiàn

see

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



PE114



见报

jiàn bào

appear in the newspaper

见鬼

jiàn guǐ

preposterous

见解

jiàn jiě

opinions

见谅

jiàn liàng

excuse me; forgive me

见面

jiàn miàn

meet

见识

jiàn shi

widen one's knowledge; enrich one's experience

见闻

jiàn wén

knowledge

见习

jiàn xí

learn on the job

见效

jiàn xiào

effective

见笑

jiàn xiào

laugh at (me or us)

见证

jiàn zhèng

witness; testimony

见异思迁

jiàn yì sī qiān

fickle; inconstant

见义勇为

jiàn yì yǒng wéi

ready to take up the cudgels for a just cause

不见

bù jiàn

lost; disappeared

Example:

我 不 见 了 一 本 书 。

Wǒ bù jiàn le yī běn shū.

It means, "I lost a book."

看

kàn

see

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



PEN 6



看病
看穿
看待

kàn bìng
kàn chuān
kàn dài

consult a doctor
see through
look upon; regard;
treat

看到
看法
看见
看来
看破

kàn dào
kàn fa
kàn jiàn
kàn lái
kàn pò

catch sight of; see
view; opinion
see
it looks as if
see through

看齐
看轻
看中
看重
看不惯

kàn qí
kàn qīng
kàn zhòng
kàn zhòng
kàn bu guàn

keep abreast of
underestimate
take a fancy to
think highly of
cannot bear the
sight of
think highly of
treated favourably

看得起
另眼相看

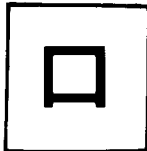
kàn de qǐ
lìng yǎn xiāng
kàn

Example:

他是来看病的。

Tā shì lái kàn bìng de.

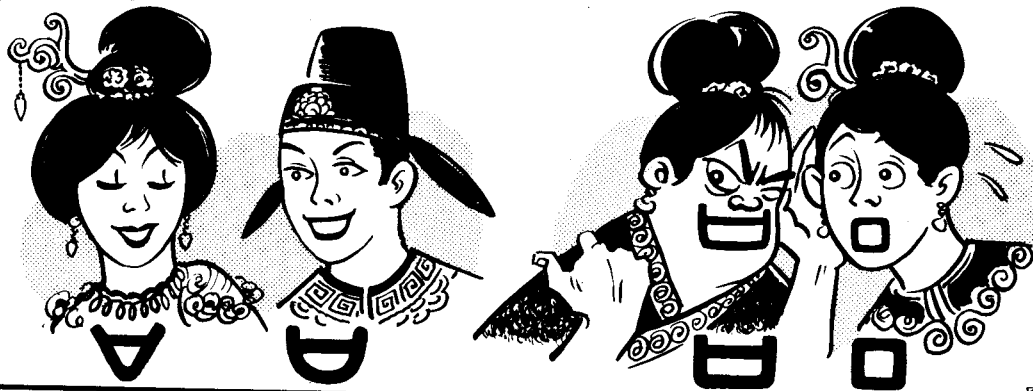
It means, "He comes to consult a doctor."



kǒu

mouth;
opening

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



FENG



口才	kǒu cái	eloquence
口吃	kǒu chī	stutter
口臭	kǒu chòu	bad breath
口袋	kǒu dài	pocket
口福	kǒu fú	gourmet's luck
口供	kǒu gòng	testimony
口号	kǒu hào	slogan
口红	kǒu hóng	lipstick
口角	kǒu jué	quarrel

口渴	kǒu kě	thirsty
人口	rén kǒu	population
口气	kǒu qì	tone
口试	kǒu shì	oral examination
口水	kǒu shuǐ	saliva
口是心非	kǒu shì xīn fēi	says yes when one means no
夸口	kuā kǒu	boasting

Example:

他的口才很好。

Tā de kǒu cái hěn hǎo.

It means, "He is very eloquent."

yán

words;
speak

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

𠄎 = 口 + 𠄎
言 = 口 + 言



PENGL

、 一 二 三 言 言 言

言辞	yán cí	one's words	言语	yán yǔ	spoken language
言和	yán hé	make peace	言不由衷	yán bù yóu zhōng	speak insincerely
言论	yán lùn	speech	言而无信	yán ér wú xìn	fail to keep faith
言谈	yán tán	the way one speaks or the words one says	言过其实	yán guò qí shí	exaggerate
言行	yán xíng	words and deeds	言听计从	yán tīng jì cóng	readily accept one's advice
			言外之意	yán wài zhī yì	implications

Example:

他言行不一致。

Tā yán xíng bù yì zhì.

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

信

xìn

believe;
trust;
letter

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



信



FENG

ノ	亻	亻	亻	信	信	信	信						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

信封
信奉
信服
信号
信件
信笺
信教
信赖
信任

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

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

信条
信徒
信托
信箱
信心
信仰
信用
写信

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

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

Example:

请给我一个信封。

Qǐng gěi wǒ yī gè xìn fēng.

It means, "Please give me an envelope."

工

gōng

work;
labour;
skill

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

MORE PAY
+ LESS WORK
= PROSPERITY



PENG

一 丁 工

工厂
工党
工地
工夫
工具
工会
工匠
工农

gōng chǎng
Gōng Dǎng
gōng dì
gōng fu
gōng jù
gōng huì
gōng jiàng
gōng nóng

factory
the Labour Party
construction site
time; effort
tools
trade union
craftsman
workers and
peasants

工钱
工人
工业
工艺
工资
工作
工程师
工业化
工艺品

gōng qián
gōng rén
gōng yè
gōng yì
gōng zī
gōng zuò
gōng chéng shī
gōng yè huà
gōng yì pǐn

service charges
worker
industry
technology
wages
job
engineer
industrialize
crafts

Example:

他是个工人。

Tā shì gè gōng rén.

It means, "He is a worker."

左

zuǒ

left;
also a Chinese
surname

左

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



PEH6

一 十 左 右 左

左边	zuǒ bian	left side
左面	zuǒ miàn	left side
左派	zuǒ pài	leftist
左倾	zuǒ qīng	left-leaning
左手	zuǒ shǒu	left hand
左翼	zuǒ yì	left wing

左右	zuǒ yòu	left and right
左右手	zuǒ yòu shǒu	the right-hand man
左右逢源	zuǒ yòu féng yuán	win advantages from both sides
左右为难	zuǒ yòu wéi nán	in a dilemma

Example:

他用左手写字。

Tā yòng zuǒ shǒu xiě zì.

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

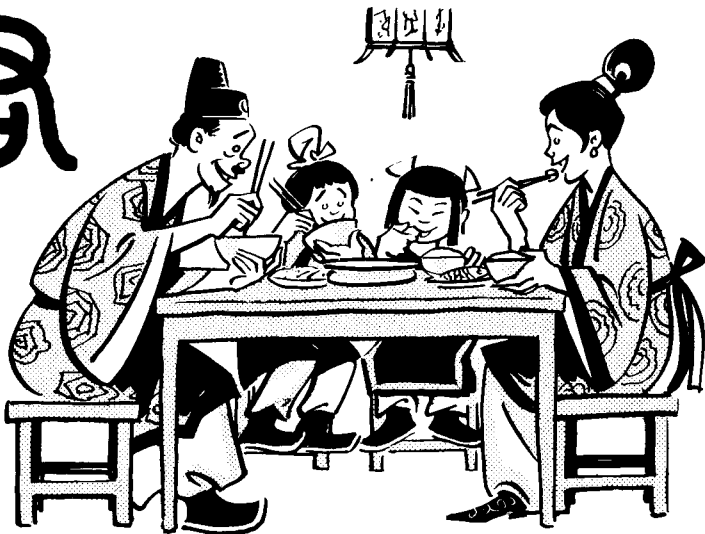
右

yòu

right

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

右



FENG

一 扌 才 右 右

右边
右面
右派
右倾

yòu bian
yòu miàn
yòu pài
yòu qīng

right side
right side
rightist
right deviation

右手
右翼
向右

yòu shǒu
yòu yì
xiàng yòu

right hand
right wing
turn right

Example:

他 向 右 转 。

Tā xiàng yòu zhuǎn.

It means, "He turns right."

舌

shé

tongue

舌 舌 舌 舌

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



FENG

丿 一 千 千 舌 舌

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

Example:

辩论会中，双方展开舌战。

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

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



ěr

ear

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



ㄹ

ㄹ

ㄹ

ㄹ

耳

56

FENG



耳朵
耳光
耳环
耳机
耳孔
耳鸣
耳目
耳塞

ěr duo
ěr guāng
ěr huán
ěr jī
ěr kǒng
ěr míng
ěr mù
ěr sai

ear
a box on the ear
earrings
earphones
earhole
tinnitus
informer
earplug

耳屎
耳语
耳边风
耳目一新
耳闻目睹

ěr shǐ
ěr yǔ
ěr biān fēng
ěr mù yī xīn
ěr wén mù dǔ

earwax
whisper
turn a deaf ear to
pleasant change
of atmosphere
what one hears
and sees

Example:

他的耳朵很灵。

Tā de ěr duo hěn líng

It means, "He has sharp ears."

取

qǔ

take; select; seize

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



FE16

一	丨	フ	フ	耳	耳	取							
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

取材	qǔ cái	acquire material (for writing)
取代	qǔ dài	replace
取道	qǔ dào	by way of; via
取得	qǔ dé	obtain
取缔	qǔ dì	ban; suppress
取决	qǔ jué	be decided by
取巧	qǔ qiǎo	resort to trickery

取舍	qǔ shě	make one's choice
取胜	qǔ shèng	score a success
取消	qǔ xiāo	cancel
取笑	qǔ xiào	make fun of
取长补短	qǔ cháng bǔ duǎn	learn from other's strong points to remedy one's weaknesses

Example:

他取消一个宴会。
Tā qǔ xiāo yī gè yàn huì.

It means, "He has cancelled a dinner."

娶

qǔ

marry

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



娶



7614

一	丨	フ	𠃉	耳	耳	取	取	取	娶	娶				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

娶亲

qǔ qīn

marry (a woman);
take a wife

Example:

他娶了亲以后,日子过得很幸福。

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

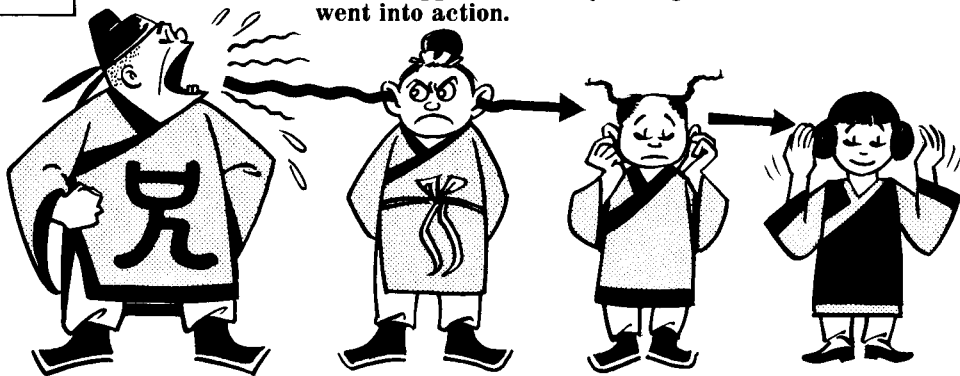
It means, "He leads a happy life after marriage."

兄

XIŌNG

elder brother

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



FENG



兄弟
兄长

xīōng dì
xīōng zhǎng

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

兄弟之邦
长兄

xīōng dì zhī bāng
zhǎng xīōng

fraternal states
elder brother

Example:

我有很多兄弟姐妹。

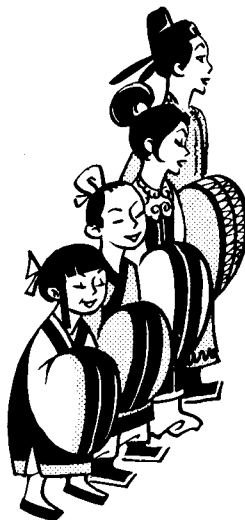
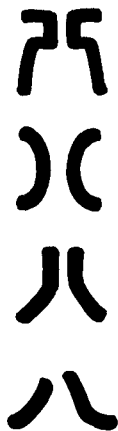
Wǒ yǒu hěnn duō xīōng dì jiě mèi.

It means, "I have many brothers and sisters."



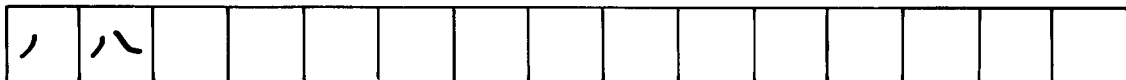
BĀ

eight



FENG

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



八仙
八月

Bā Xiān
bā yuè

The Eight Immortals
August

八字

bā zì

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

Example:

这个月是八月。

Zhè gè yuè shì bā yuè.

It means, "This month is August."

兌

DUI

exchange;
barter

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



FENG



兑付	duì fù	cash (a cheque, etc)
兑换	duì huàn	exchange
兑现	duì xiàn	pay cash
兑换表	duì huàn biǎo	exchange table

Example:

他去银行兑现支票。

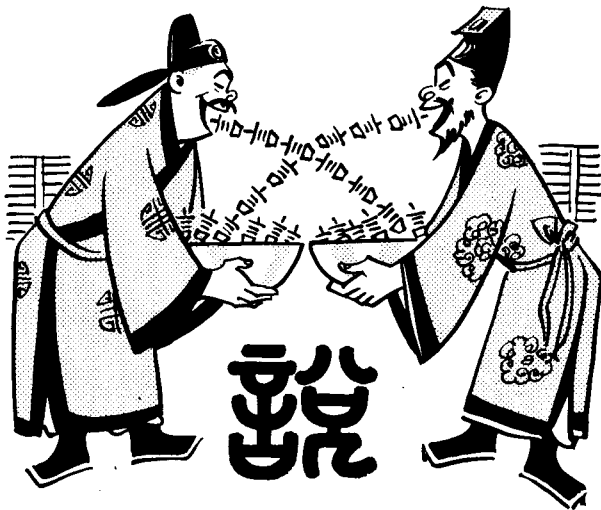
Tā qù yínháng duì xiàn zhī piào.

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

说 (說)

SHUŌ speak; theory; story

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



FENG

、 讠 讠 讠 讠 讠 讠 说 说

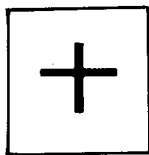
说穿	shuō chuān	expose	说亲	shuō qīn	act as matchmaker
说法	shuō fǎ	way of saying a thing	说情	shuō qíng	plead for mercy for somebody
说服	shuō fú	persuade; convince	说笑	shuō xiào	chatting and laughing
说话	shuō huà	talk	说不定	shuō bu dìng	perhaps
说谎	shuō huǎng	tell a lie	说大话	shuō dà huà	talk big; boast
说教	shuō jiào	preach	说得来	shuō de lái	can get along
说理	shuō lǐ	reason things out	说到做到	shuō dào zuò dào	do what one says
说媒	shuō méi	act as matchmaker	小说	xiǎo shuō	novel
说明	shuō míng	explain			

Example:

他不能说服我。

Tā bù néng shuō fú wǒ.

It means, "He cannot convince me."

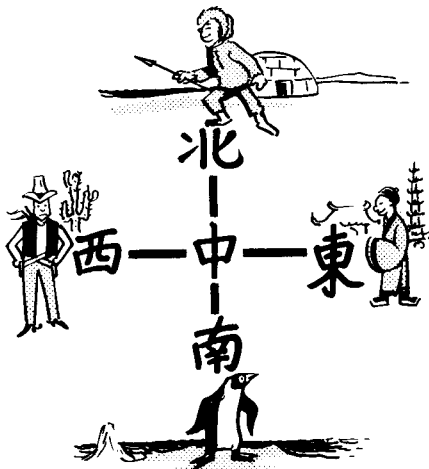


SHÍ

ten

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

+



FENG



十分

shí fēn

very; fully

十字架

shí zì jià

cross

十万

shí wàn

one hundred thousand

十拿九稳

shí ná jiǔ wěn

90 per cent certain of

十月

shí yuè

October

十全十美

shí quán shí měi

faultless

十足

shí zú

100 per cent

十之八九

shí zhī bā jiǔ

in eight or nine cases out of ten

十二月

shí èr yuè

December

十字路口

shí zì lù kǒu

crossroad

十一月

shí yī yuè

November

Example:

他对你的工作十分满意。

Tā duì nǐ de gōng zuò shí fēn mǎn yì.

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

古

Gǔ
old; ancient;
also a Chinese
surname

This character 古 is applicable to that which has passed through ten 十 mouths 口 — a tradition dating back ten generations. It includes anything very old, ancient, of antiquity — whether valuable, invaluable or valueless. Our picture illustrates the process of passing through ten mouths something of questionable value.



一 十 古 古

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

Example:

罗马有许多古迹。

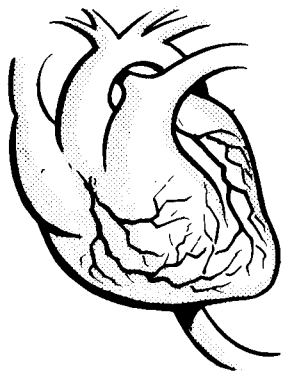
Luó Mǎ yǒu xǔ duō gǔ jì.

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

心

XĪN

heart

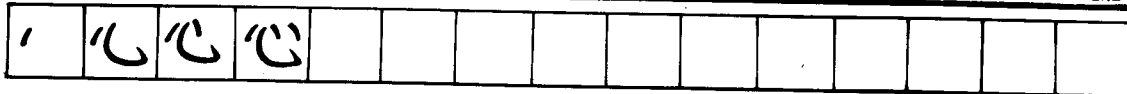


心



PHG

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



心爱
心得
心烦
心腹
心理
心事

xīn ài
xīn dé
xīn fán
xīn fù
xīn lǐ
xīn shì

dear
personal insight
vexed
trusted subordinate
psychology
things that weigh
on one's mind
frame of mind
state of mind

心目
心情

xīn mù
xīn qíng

心思
心甘情愿
心花怒放
心神不定
心心相印

xīn sí
xīn gān qíng
yuàn
xīn huā nù fàng
xīn shén bù dìng
xīn xīn xiāng yìn

thought; idea
willingly
elated
restless mind
have mutual
affinity
disheartened

灰心

huī xīn

Example:

不要因失败而灰心。

Bù yào yīn shī bài ér huī xīn

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

怒

NÙ

anger; rage;
passion

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



人	女	女	奴	奴	奴	怒	怒	怒						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

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

Example:

他们两人怒目而视。

Tā men liǎng rén nù mù ér shì.

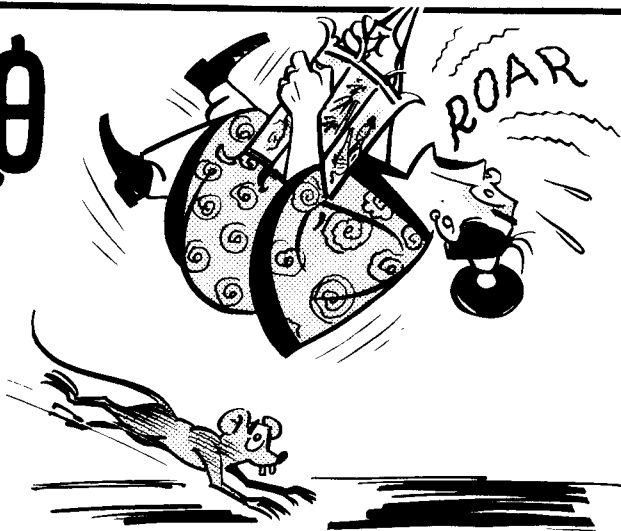
It means, "They stare angrily at each other."

怕

PÀ

fear

怕



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

FENG

、 忄 忄 忄 忄 怕 怕 怕

怕人
怕生

pà rén
pà shēng

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

怕死
怕羞
害怕

pà sǐ
pà xiū
hài pà

fear death
bashful; shy
scared

Example:

她 很 怕 我 。

Tā hěn pà wǒ .

It means, “She is scared of me.”

身

SHĒN

body

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



PEN6

丿	丨	勹	勹	身	身								
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

身边	shēn biān	at (or by) one's side
身材	shēn cái	figure (body)
身分	shēn fèn	social status
身价	shēn jià	social status
身躯	shēn qū	body; stature
身世	shēn shì	one's lot

身体	shēn tǐ	body
身心	shēn xīn	body and mind
身孕	shēn yùn	pregnancy
身分证	shēn fēn zhèng	identity card
身临其境	shēn lín qí jìng	be present on the spot

Example:

他的身体很弱。

Tā de shēn tǐ hěn ruò.

It means, “He is very weak.”

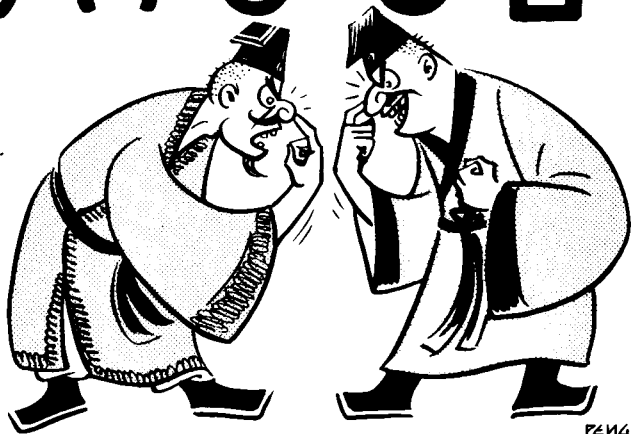
自

zì

self;
oneself

自 自 自 自 自

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



PEW

丿 丨 冫 自 自 自 自

自白	zì bái	self-confession
自卑	zì bēi	inferiority complex; self-abased
自动	zì dòng	automatic
自杀	zì shā	commit suicide
自首	zì shǒu	give oneself up
自传	zì zhuàn	autobiography
自己	zì jǐ	oneself
自立	zì lì	independent
自满	zì mǎn	complacent

自由	zì yóu	freedom
自愿	zì yuàn	voluntarily
自来水	zì lái shuǐ	tap water
自暴自弃	zì bào zì qì	self-forsaking
自告奋勇	zì gào fèn yǒng	volunteer one's service
自高自大	zì gāo zì dà	conceited; egoistic
自食其力	zì shí qí lì	self-supporting
自相矛盾	zì xiāng máo dùn	self-contradiction

Example:

他很自私。

Tā hěn zì sī.

It means, “He is very selfish.”

齿

(齒) CHǐ
teeth

𪗇 𪗈 𪗉 𪗊 𪗋

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



丨	卜	止	𪗇	𪗈	𪗉	𪗊	𪗋						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

齿轮
齿腔
齿痛

chǐ lún
chǐ qiāng
chǐ tòng

gear-wheel
dental cavity
toothache

齿龈
牙齿

chǐ yín
yá chǐ

the gums
tooth

Example:

他的牙齿痛。

Tā de yá chǐ tòng.

It means, "He has a toothache."

止

ZHǐ

halt; stop

𠂔 𠂕 𠂖 𠂗 止

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



PE14

丨 卜 止 止

止步	zhǐ bù	halt; stop	止咳药	zhǐ ké yào	cough mixture
止境	zhǐ jìng	limit; end	停止	tíng zhǐ	halt; stop
止渴	zhǐ kě	quench thirst	终止	zhōng zhǐ	put an end to; cease
止咳	zhǐ kě	relieve a cough	望梅止渴	wàng méi zhǐ kě	gaze at plums to quench one's thirst; vain hopes
止痛	zhǐ tòng	allay pains			
止血	zhǐ xuè	stop bleeding			

Example:

酸梅可以止渴。

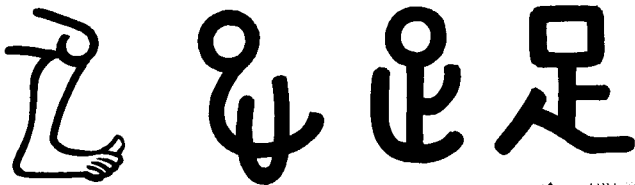
Suān méi kě yǐ zhǐ kě

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

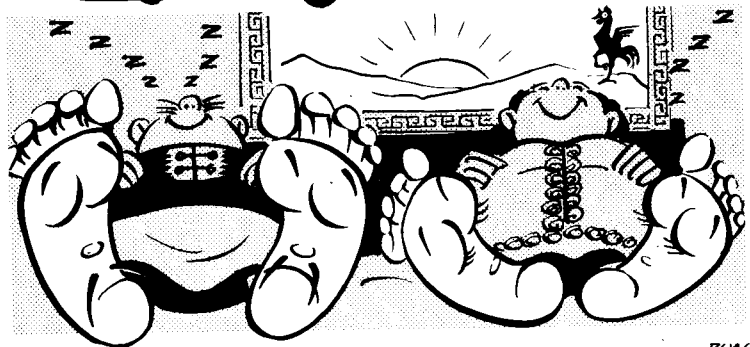
足

zú

foot



The character: 足 apparently pictures the knee-cap: 冫 resting on the foot: 止. The full circle: 〇 suggests completion and rest, as opposed to motion. The modern form: 足, signifying foot at rest, is applicable to feet in general. And feet are generally at rest, as our example shows.



PENG



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

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

Example:

他喜欢看足球赛。

Tā xǐ huān kàn zú qiú sài.

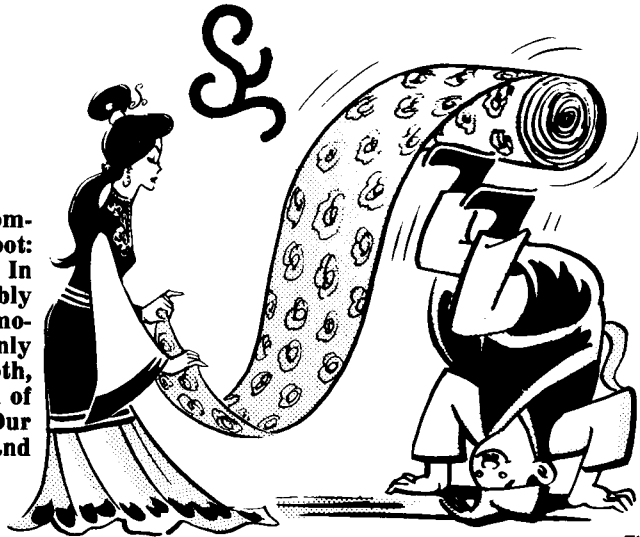
It means, "He likes to watch football matches."

疋

ǐ

piece of cloth;
bale or roll

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



一	疋	疋	疋	疋															
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

疋头
一疋布

ǐ tóu
yī ǐ bù

piece goods
one piece of cloth

Example:

她买了一疋布。

Tā mǎi le yī ǐ bù.

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

步

BÙ

step;
pace



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



FENG



步兵
步步
步调

bù bīng
bù bù
bù diào

infantry
step by step
pace or speed (in
walking or
running)

步伐
步法
步枪

bù fá
bù fǎ
bù qiāng

pace
footwork
rifle

步行
步骤
步步高升

bù xíng
bù zhòu
bù bù gāo shēng

go on foot
move; measure
rise step by step
(promotions)

进步
跑步
散步

jìn bù
pǎo bù
sàn bù

progress; improve
jog
take a stroll

Example:

他的功课进步得很快。

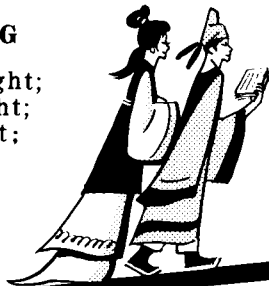
Tā de gōng kè jìn bù de hěn kuài.

It means, “His lessons have improved rapidly.”

正

ZHÈNG

straight;
upright;
correct;
exact



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



PENG

一 丁 下 正 正

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

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

Example:

那 犯 人 已 改 邪 归 正 。

Nà fàn rén yǐ gǎi xié guī zhèng.

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

是

SHÌ

right; yes;
am, are, is

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

是
是
是
是
是



PEN 6

丨 冂 𠄎 日 旦 早 早 是 是

是的
是非
是否
是故
不是

shì de
shì fēi
shì fǒu
shì gù
bù shì

yes; right
right and wrong
whether or not?
for this reason
not so

Example:

这把雨伞不是我的。

Zhè bǎ yǔ sǎn bù shì wǒ de.

It means, "This umbrella is not mine."

走

Zǒu
walk;
run;
hasten;
depart

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

走
走
走
走



一 十 土 丰 丰 丰 走

走动	zǒu dòng	move around
走访	zǒu fǎng	have an interview with
走狗	zǒu gǒu	running dog; lackey
走廊	zǒu láng	corridor
走漏	zǒu lòu	leak out (secret)
走路	zǒu lù	walk
走私	zǒu sī	smuggling

走失	zǒu shī	be lost
走兽	zǒu shòu	beast
走向	zǒu xiàng	walk towards
走样	zǒu yàng	change in shape
走卒	zǒu zú	lackey
走漏风声	zǒu lòu fēng shēng	leak out a secret
走马看花	zǒu mǎ kàn huā	taking a hurried glance

Example:

他走路去学校。

Tā zǒu lù qù xué xiào.

It means, "He walks to school."

土

Tǔ

earth;
soil;
ground

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

土
土
土



PE16

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

土产

tǔ chǎn

local commodities
(natural pro-
duces)

土人

tǔ rén

native

土质

tǔ zhì

property of soil

土地

tǔ dì

land

土包子

tǔ bāo zi

country bumpkin

土匪

tǔ fěi

bandit

土耳其

Tǔ Ěr Qí

Turkey

土话

tǔ huà

local dialect

土木工程

Tǔ mù gōng
chéng

civil engineering

土壤

tǔ rǎng

soil

泥土

ní tǔ

soil, earth

Example:

这是一块肥沃的土地。

Zhè shì yí kuài féi wò de tǔ dì.

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

坐

ZUÒ

to sit;
a seat

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



坐



PENG

丨 人 亼 𠤎 𠤏 坐 坐

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

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

Example:

他请客人坐下。

Tā qǐng kè rén zuò xià

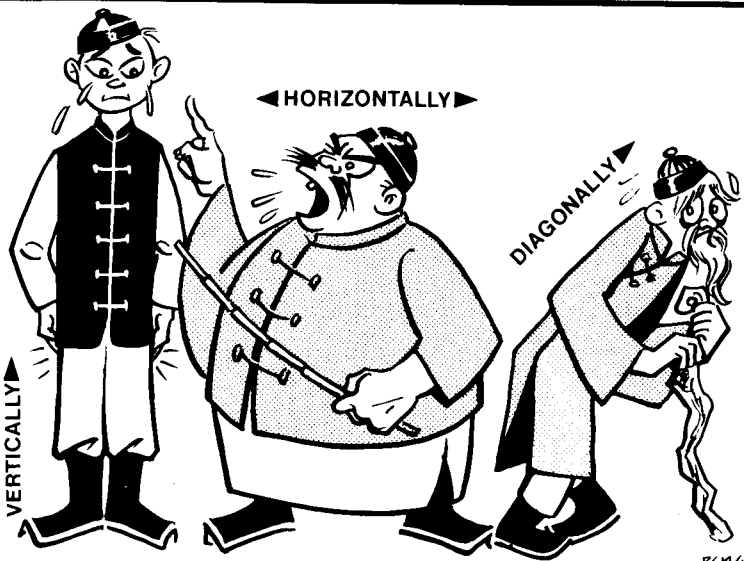
It means, "He invited the guest to sit down."

生

SHĒNG

produce;
bear;
grow

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



ノ	ㄣ	ㄥ	牛	生															
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

生病
生存
生动
生活
生理
生命
生气
生日

shēng bìng
shēng cún
shēng dòng
shēng huó
shēng lǐ
shēng mìng
shēng qì
shēng rì

fall ill
survive
vivid
livelihood
physiology
life
angry
birthday

生疏
生物
生效
生意
生硬
生长
生气勃勃

shēng shū
shēng wù
shēng xiào
shēng yì
shēng yìng
shēng zhǎng
shēng qì bó bó

unfamiliar
biology
become effective
business
rigid
grow up
full of vigour and vitality

Example:

明天是她的生日。

Míng tiān shì tā de shēng rì.

It means, "Tomorrow is her birthday."

姓

XÌNG

surname

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



姓	女	女	如	如	如	姓	姓								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

姓名
姓谱

xìng míng
xìng pǔ

surname and name
genealogical record;
family register

百姓
贵姓

bǎi xìng
guì xìng

common people
what is your
surname?

姓氏

xìng shì

surname

Example:

请问您姓什么？

Qǐng wèn nín xìng shén me?

It means, "What is your surname, please?"

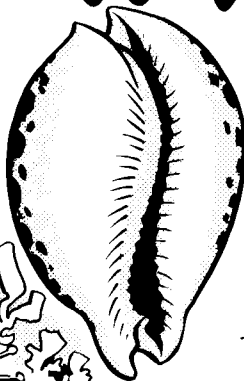
贝

(貝)

BÈI
shells;
valuables

𠄎 𠄏 貝 貝 貝

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



PENG



贝雕
贝壳
贝类
贝玉

bèi diāo
bèi kè
bèi lèi
bèi yù

shell carving
shell
shellfish
valuables; gems

贝子
宝贝

bèi zi
bǎo bèi

cowries—used as
currency in
ancient times
precious; darling

Example:

这贝壳很美。

Zhè bèi kè hěn měi.

It means, “This shell is very beautiful.”

贱 (賤)

JIÀN cheap; mean; worthless

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



FENG

丨	冂	贝	贝	贝	贱	贱	贱						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

贱价 jiàn jià
 贱卖 jiàn mài
 贱物(货) jiàn wù (huò)

cheap; low-priced
 cheap-sale
 cheap and common things; inferior quality goods

贫贱 pín jiàn
 贱骨头 jiàn gú tóu

poor and humble
 miserable (or contemptible) wretch

Example:

她出生贫贱。

Tā chū shēng pín jiàn.

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

贵 (貴)

GUÌ
expensive;
dear;
honourable

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



PENG

丶	冂	口	中	虫	卑	貴	貴										
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

Example:

英国有许多贵族人家。

Yīng Guó yǒu xǔ duō guì zú rén jiā.

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

买 (買) Mǎi
buy

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



买方	mǎi fāng	buyer
买好	mǎi hǎo	try to win somebody's favour
买价	mǎi jià	buying price
买卖	mǎi mài	buying and selling

买通	mǎi tōng	bribe; buy over
买主	mǎi zhǔ	buyer
买空卖空	mǎi kōng mài kōng	speculate (in stocks, etc.)

Example:

他是这辆新车的买主。

Tā shì zhè liàng xīn chē de mǎi zhǔ.

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

卖 (賣)

MAI
sell

賣 is derived by loading 買 (the business of netting in cowries) with 士 (out, a contraction of 出). Hence 賣 means to sell, i.e., to put out or push (士 or 出) goods and netting in (四 or 网) cowrie-money (貝). Our picture exposes the fishy business of pushing and netting.



FZMG

一 十 士 去 去 去 卖 卖

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

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

Example:

他出卖了自己的哥哥。

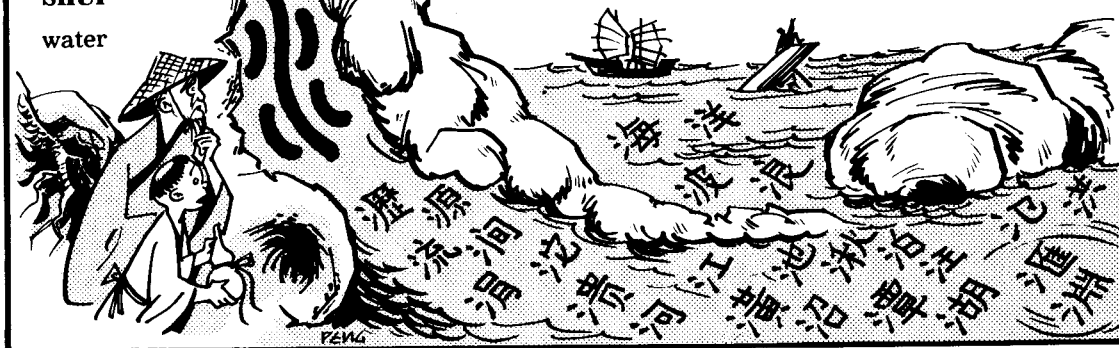
Tā chū mài le zì jǐ de gē gē

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

水

SHUǐ
water

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



丨 丿 ㇇ 水

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

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

Example:

吃水果对身体有益。

Chī shuǐ guǒ duì shēn tǐ yǒu yì.

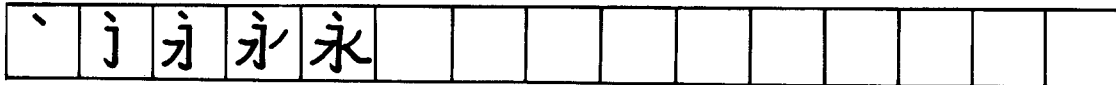
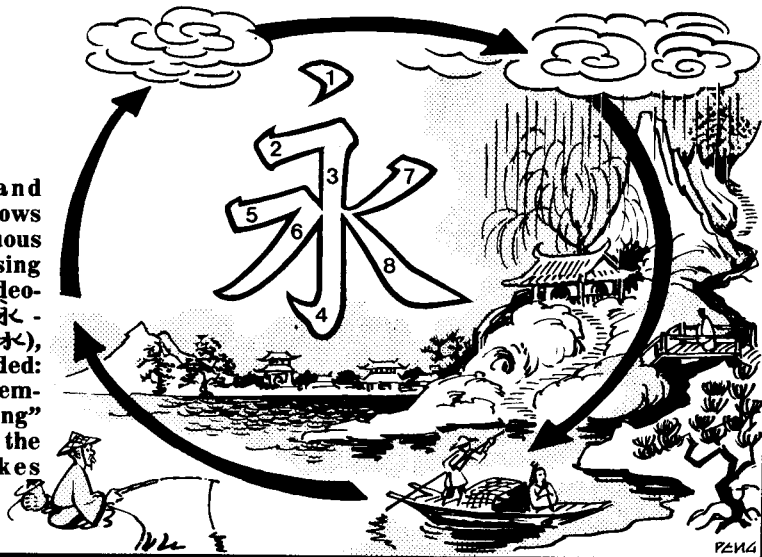
It means, “Eating fruits is good for our health.”

永

YǒNG

everlasting;
perpetual;
forever

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



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

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

Example:

他们的爱情是永恒的。

Tā men de ài qíng shì yǒng héng de.

It means, "Their love is everlasting."

冰 (冰) BĪNG

ice

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



丶	冫	冫	冫	冰	冰										
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

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

Example:

她喜欢吃冰淇淋。

Tā xǐ huān chī bīng qí lín.

It means, "She likes ice-cream."

泉

QUÁN

spring;
fountain

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



'	丿	冫	白	白	𩺰	𩺱	泉	泉						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

泉水	quán shuǐ	spring water
泉源	quán yuán	source of spring; source
喷泉	pēn quán	fountain

Example:

这个喷泉很美。

Zhè gè pēn quán hěn měi.

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

雨

Yǔ

rain

雨, the character for rain, is a picture of raindrops (二) falling vertically down (丨) from a cloud (冂) in the heavens (一). Not all welcome the rain as showers of blessing from heaven for, as the saying goes, "The farmer hopes for rain, the traveller for fine weather."



一	冂	丨	二	雨	雨	雨	雨						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

雨点
雨季
雨量
雨伞
雨水
雨天
雨衣

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

raindrop
rainy season
rainfall
umbrella
rain water
rainy day
raincoat

雨过天晴 yǔ guò tiān qíng

the sun shines
again after the
rain

雨后春笋 yǔ hòu chūn sǔn

(spring up like)
bamboo shoots
after a spring rain

下雨 xià yǔ

raining

Example:

下雨了，快进来吧！

Xià yǔ le, kuài jìn lái ba!

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

云

(雲)

YÚN

cloud

云 雲 云

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



一

二

云 云

云彩
云层
云集

yún cǎi
yún céng
yún jí

cloud
layers of cloud
gather together in
crowds

云外
云雾
云霞
云霄
云烟

yún wài
yún wù
yún xiá
yún xiāo
yún yān

beyond the clouds
mist; fog
rosy clouds
the skies
cloud and mist

云消雾散

yún xiāo wù sàn

the clouds have
cleared and the
mist dispersed—
(figuratively)
troubles have
been cleared up

白云

bái yún

white clouds

浮云

fú yún

passing cloud

乌云密布

wū yún mǎn bù

black clouds gather
in the sky

Example:

天上有朵朵白云。

Tiān shàng yǒu duǒ duǒ bái yún.

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

雪

XUĚ

snow

雪

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



P2-114

一 丨 冫 雨 雨 雨 雨 雪 雪 雪

雪白
雪崩
雪恨
雪花
雪茄
雪景
雪亮

xuě bái
xuě bēng
xuě hèn
xuě huā
xuě jiā
xuě jǐng
xuě liàng

snow-white
snowslide
avenge
snowflake
cigar
snow scenery
bright as snow

雪球
雪人
雪山

xuě qiú
xuě rén
xuě shān

snowball
snowman
snow-covered
mountain

雪花膏
雪中送炭

xuě huā gāo
xuě zhōng sòng
tàn

vanishing cream
(figuratively) timely
assistance

下雪

xià xuě

to snow

Example:

冬天，小孩子喜欢造雪人。

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

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

电 (電)

DIÀN lightning; electricity

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

電
電
電
電



72M4



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

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

Example:

他喜欢骑电单车。

Tā xǐ huān qí diàn dān chē.

It means, "He likes riding motorcycle."

雷

LÉI

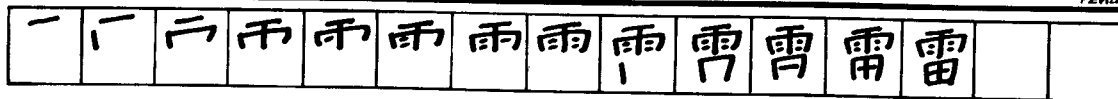
thunder

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



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

F&MG



雷达
雷击

léi dá
léi jī

radar
be struck by
lightning

雷鸣
雷声
雷雨
雷达网

léi míng
léi shēng
léi yǔ
léi dá wǎng

thunderous
thunderclap
thunderstorm
radar service
network

雷同前人

léi tóng qián rén

mere follower
of predecessors

打雷

dǎ léi

to thunder

地雷

dì léi

land-mine

水雷

shuǐ léi

sea-mine

鱼雷

yú léi

torpedo

鱼雷艇

yú léi tǐng

torpedo boat

大发雷霆

dà fā léi tíng

fly into a rage

Example:

管工对工人大发雷霆。

Guǎn gōng duì gōng rén dà fā léi tíng.

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

伞

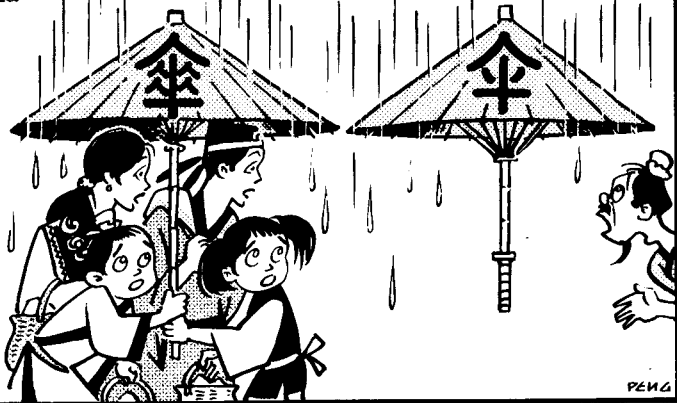
(伞)

SǎN

umbrella

伞伞伞伞

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



PENGL

丿	人	人	人	伞						
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伞兵

sǎn bīng

paratroop;
parachuter

雨伞

yǔ sǎn

umbrella

降落伞

jiàng luò sǎn

parachute

Example:

快要下雨了，记得带一把雨伞。

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

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

川

CHUĀN

river;
stream

川

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



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

Example:

路上车辆川流不息。

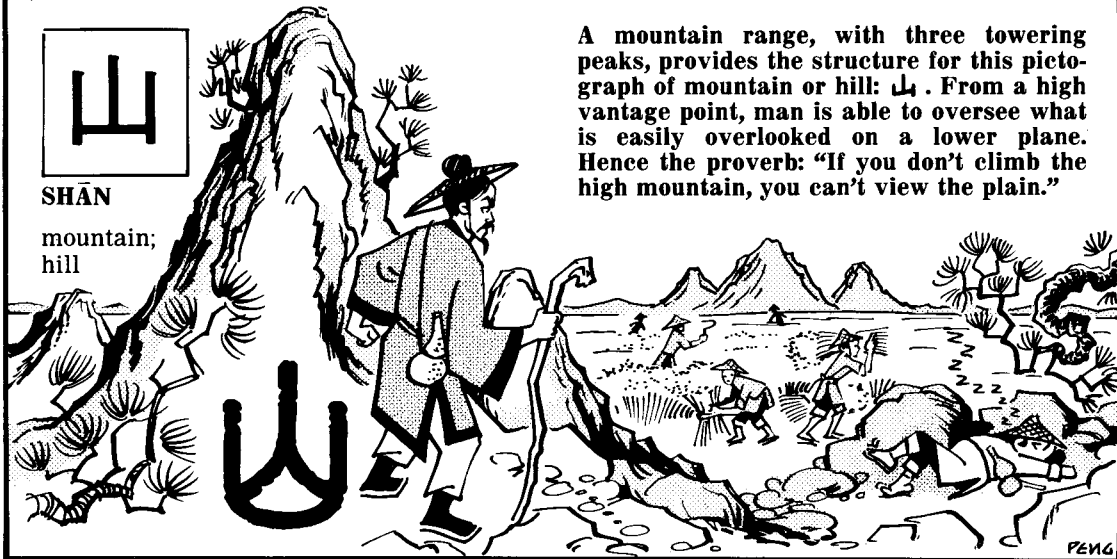
Lù shàng chē liàng chuān liú bù xī.

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

山

SHĀN

mountain;
hill



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



山川	shān chuān	mountains and rivers	山西	Shān Xī	Shanxi, China
山峰	shān fēng	summit of a mountain	山崖	shān yá	cliff
山东	Shān Dōng	Shandong, China	山盟海誓	shān méng hǎi shì	solemn oath
山顶	shān dǐng	mountain top	山明水秀	shān míng shuǐ xiù	beautiful scenery
山歌	shān gē	folk song	山穷水尽	shān qióng shuǐ jìn	circumstances of extreme need
山谷	shān gǔ	valley	山珍海味	shān zhēn hǎi wèi	delicacies
山脉	shān mài	mountain range			
山坡	shān pō	hill slope			
山头	shān tóu	hilltop			

Example:

他被山明水秀的西湖迷住了。

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

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

鸟 (鳥) NIǎO
bird

鳥 鳥 鳥 鳥

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



勺 勺 鸟 鸟

鸟巢	niǎo cháo	bird's nest
鸟瞰	niǎo kàn	bird's eye view
鸟类	niǎo lèi	birds
鸟笼	niǎo lóng	bird cage
鸟兽	niǎo shòu	birds and animals
鸟爪	niǎo zhǎo	bird's claws

鸟语花香	niǎo yǔ huā xiāng	birds sing and flowers give forth their fragrance — characterizing a fine spring day
小鸟	xiǎo niǎo	small bird

Example:

你 家 里 有 养 鸟 吗 ？

Nǐ jiā lǐ yǒu yǎng niǎo ma?

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

岛 (島)

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

DǎO

island



𠂇 𠂇 𪗇 島 岛

岛国
岛屿
半岛
群岛

dǎo guó
dǎo yǔ
bàn dǎo
qún dǎo

island state
islands
peninsula
archipelago

Example:

新加坡是一个岛国。

Xīn Jiā Pō shì yí gè dǎo guó.

It means, "Singapore is an island state."

乌 (烏)

wū crow

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



夕	乌	乌																	
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乌龟	wū guī	tortoise
乌黑	wū hēi	jet black
乌鸦	wū yā	crow
乌有	wū yǒu	naught
乌云	wū yún	dark clouds
乌贼	wū zéi	cuttlefish

乌干达	Wū Gān Dá	Uganda (Africa)
乌拉圭	Wū Lā Guī	Uruguay (Latin America)
乌托邦	Wū Tuō Bāng	Utopia
乌合之众	wū hé zhī zhòng	disorderly band
乌烟瘴气	wū yān zhàn qì	foul atmosphere

Example:

乌龟是两栖动物。

Wū guī shì liǎng qī dòng wù.

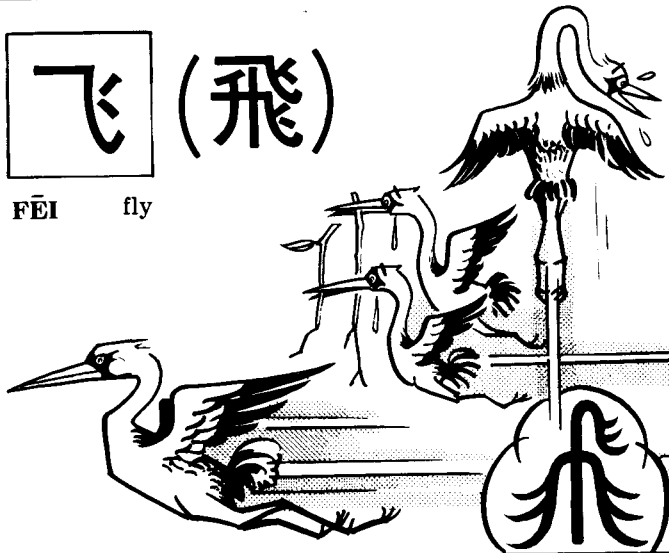
It means, "The tortoise is an amphibian."

飞

(飛)

FĒI fly

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



飛

飛

飞

FENG

飞 飞 飞

飞机师 fēi jī shī pilot
飞禽走兽 fēi qín zǒu shòu birds and beasts

Example:

他要做个飞机师
Tā yào zuò gè fēi jī shī.

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

羽

Yǔ

feathers;
wings

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



丿	勹	习	羽	羽	羽												
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羽毛	yǔ máo	feather
羽毛球	yǔ máo qiú	badminton
羽毛球拍	yǔ máo qiú pāi	badminton racket
羽毛未丰	yǔ máo wèi fēng	still young and immature

Example:

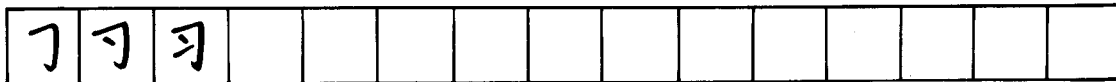
我喜欢打羽毛球。

Wǒ xǐ huān dǎ yǔ máo qiú.

It means, "I like to play badminton."

习 (習) xí
practise

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



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

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

Example:

我们应该向伟人学习。

Wǒ men yīng gāi xiàng wéi rén xué xí.

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

扇

SHÀN

fan



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



FENG

丶	勹	户	扇	扇	扇	扇	扇	扇						
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扇动

shàn dòng

fan; flap

扇惑

shàn huò

incite; agitate

扇形

shàn xíng

fan-shaped

扇子

shàn zi

fan

一扇门

yí shàn mén

a door

Example:

这扇子真美丽。

Zhè shàn zi zhēng měi lì.

It means, "This is a beautiful fan."

鱼

(魚) YÚ fish

魚 𩺰 𩺱 𩺲 魚 魚



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



PEMG

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渔 (渔) 渔 渔

YÚ fishing

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



渔村
渔夫
渔港
渔歌

yú cūn
yú fū
yú gǎng
yú gē

fishing-village
fisherman
fishing port
fisherman's song

渔利
渔民
渔业
渔舟

yú lì
yú mín
yú yè
yú zhōu

reap unfair gains
fisherman
fishery
fishing boat

Example:

他是一个勤劳的渔夫。

Tā shì yí gè qín láo de yú fū.

It means, "He is a hardworking fisherman."

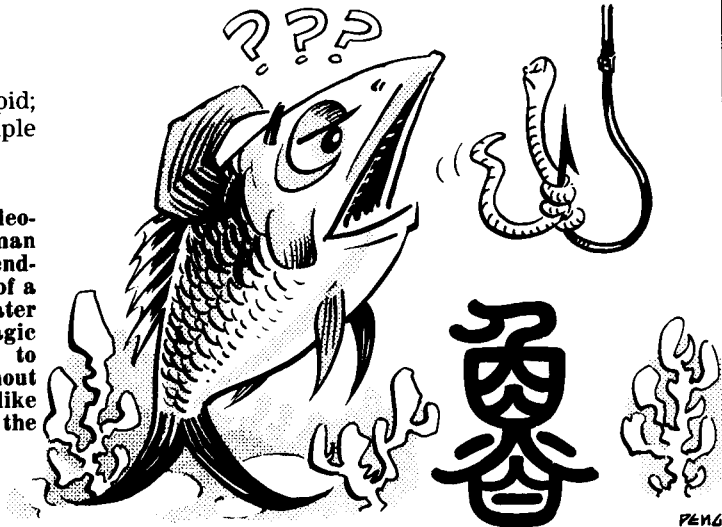
鲁

(鲁)

Lǚ

stupid;
simple

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



ノ	夕	夕	夕	夕	夕	魚	魚	魯	魯				
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--

鲁钝
鲁莽

lǚ dùn
lǚ mǎng

stupid
reckless; careless

Example:

他做事很鲁莽。

Tā zuò shì hěn lǚ mǎng.

It means, “He does his work carelessly.”

羊

YÁNG

sheep;
goat

羊 羊 羊 羊 羊

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



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

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

Example:

他不吃羊肉。

Tā bù chī yáng ròu.

It means, "He does not eat mutton."

鲜 (鲜)

XIĀN fresh

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



鲜果
鲜红
鲜花
鲜美
鲜明
鲜奶

xīān guǒ
xiān hóng
xiān huā
xiān měi
xiān míng
xiān nǎi

fresh fruit
bright red
fresh flower
delicious; tasty
vividness
fresh milk

鲜血
鲜艳
鲜艳夺目
新鲜

xiān xuè
xiān yàn
xiān yàn duó mù
xīn xiān

blood
colourful;
bright-coloured
attractive to
the eyes
fresh

Example:

植物园里，花儿鲜艳夺目。

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

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

羔

GĀO

lamb;
kid



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

美



PEWLO



羔皮
羔羊
羔子

gāo pí
gāo yáng
gāo zi

lamb skin
kid; lamb
lamb; fawn

Example:

母羊不见了羔羊。

Mǔ yáng bú jiàn le gāo yáng.

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

美

MĚI

beautiful;
admirable

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



美观
美国
美好
美化
美景
美丽
美梦
美妙

měi guān
Měi Guó
měi hǎo
měi huà
měi jǐng
měi lì
měi mèng
měi miào

nice looking
America
fine; glorious
beautify
beautiful scenery
beautiful
fond dream
splendid

美满
美术
美味
美元
美联社
美容院
美术家

měi mǎn
měi shù
měi wèi
měi yuán
Měi Lián Shè
měi róng yuàn
měi shù jiā

happy
fine arts
delicious
U.S. dollar
Associated Press
beauty-parlour
artist

Example:

她的脸型很美。

Tā de liǎn xíng hěn měi.

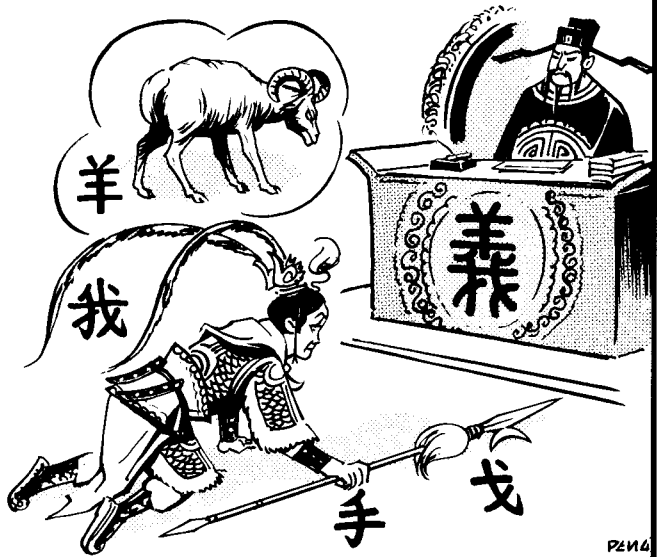
It means, "She has a pretty face."

义

(義)

Yì justice; righteousness

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



ノ 义 义

义愤
义气

yì fèn
yì qì

indignation
code of
brotherhood

义士

yì shì

high-minded or
chivalrous person

义务

yì wù

obligation; duty

义演

yì yǎn

benefit performance

义不容辞

yì bù róng cí

be duty-bound

义务劳动

yì wù láo dòng

voluntary labour

意义

yì yì

meaning

正义

zhèng yì

justice

Example:

保卫国家是人民的义务。

Bǎo wèi guó jiā shì rén mín de yì wù.

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

洋

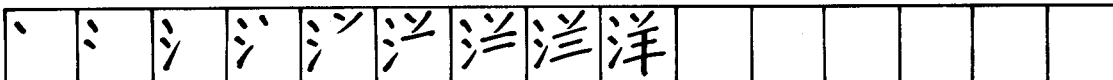
YÁNG

ocean;
foreign

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



P2414



洋葱
洋服

yáng cōng
yáng fú

onion
Western-style
clothes

洋行
洋化
洋灰
洋货

yáng háng
yáng huà
yáng huī
yáng huò

foreign firm
westernized
cement
imported goods;
foreign goods

洋人
洋溢
洋洋得意

yáng rén
yáng yì
yáng yáng dé yì

foreigner
fill with
be very pleased
with oneself

海洋
大西洋
太平洋

hǎi yáng
Dà Xī Yáng
Tài Píng Yáng

ocean
Atlantic Ocean
Pacific Ocean

Example:

他的女朋友很洋化。

Tā de nǚ péng yǒu hěn yáng huà.

It means, “His girlfriend is very westernized.”

羨 (羨)

XIÀN covet; desire

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



丶 丿 一 二 羊 羊 羊 羊 羊 羨 羨 羨 羨

羡慕

xiàn mù

admire; envy

Example:

他很羡慕我有这么一个好教师。

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

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

火

HUǒ

fire

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



火柴
火车
火光
火海
火花
火化
火箭
火警

huǒ chái
huǒ chē
huǒ guāng
huǒ hǎi
huǒ huā
huǒ huà
huǒ jiàn
huǒ jǐng

match
train
flame; blaze
sea of fire
sparks
cremate
rocket
fire alarm

火力
火炉
火气
火山
火星
火药
火灾

huǒ lì
huǒ lú
huǒ qì
huǒ shān
Huǒ Xīng
huǒ yào
huǒ zāi

fire-power
furnace
temper
volcano
Mars
gun-powder
fire (as a calamity)

Example:

火车上 人山人海。

Huǒ chē shàng rén shān rén hǎi.

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

炎

YÁN

blaze; flame

The character for flame (炎) itself was formed from two fires (火), one atop the other. Because of its inflammatory nature, it may well spread like wildfire and the people around it would suffer from the burning heat.



FENG

丶	丶	丶	火	火	炎	炎								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

炎凉
炎热

yán liáng
yán rè

cold-shoulder
burning (or
scorching) hot

炎夏
炎炎
炎症

yán xià
yán yán
yán zhèng

hot summer
sweltering
inflammation

Example:

今天天气很炎热。

Jīn tiān tiān qì hěn yán rè.

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

谈 (談)

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

TÁN

chat;
talk



FENG



谈到
谈话
谈论
谈判
谈天

tán dào
tán huà
tán lùn
tán pàn
tán tiān

speak of
talk; converse
discuss
negotiate
chit-chat

谈心
谈何容易

tán xīn
tán hé róng yì

heart-to-heart talk
easier said than
done; by no
means easy

谈笑风生

tán xiào fēng
shēng

light-hearted and
interesting talk

Example:

我们在树荫下谈天。

Wǒ men zài shù yīn xià tán tiān.

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

灰 (灰)

HUĪ ashes; dust; lime

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



一 厂 尸 尸 尸 灰

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

Example:

橱上有一层灰尘。

Chú shàng yǒu yì céng huī chén.

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

灾 (災)

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

ZĀI calamity



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

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

Example:

新加坡很少发生水灾。

Xīn Jiā Pō hěn shǎo fā shēng shuǐ zāi.

It means, "Floods seldom occur in Singapore."

煽

SHĀN

incite; instigate; stir up

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

煽



FENG

丶 丿 灬 火 灶 灶 灶 炉 煽 煽 煽 煽 煽

煽动

shān dòng

instigate; incite

煽乱

shān luàn

stir up revolt

煽动者

shān dòng zhě

agitator

煽风点火

shān fēng diǎn huǒ

create trouble

Example:

他煽动旧同学欺侮新同学。

Tā shān dòng jiù tóng xué qī wǔ xīn tóng xué

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

烧 (燒)

SHĀO burn; bake; roast

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



FENG

丶 丿 灬 火 炆 炆 炆 炆 烧 烧

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

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

Example:

她常去寺庙烧香。

Tā cháng qù sì miào shāo xiāng.

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

黑

HEI

black

The original seal form depicted a flame (炎) under a smoke vent or window (罅), blackening it (熏) with soot. Squaring the window: 田 and modifying the flame: 杰, produced the modern character: 黑, meaning black.

炎
熏
熏
熏
黑



黑暗
黑白
黑板
黑人
黑色
黑市

hēi' àn
hēi bái
hēi bǎn
hēi rén
hēi sè
hēi shì

dark
black and white
blackboard
Black people
black
black market

黑心
黑夜
黑名单
黑啤酒
乌黑

hēi xīn
hēi yè
hēi míng dān
hēi pí jiǔ
wū hēi

black-hearted; evil-
minded
dark night
blacklist
stout
jet black

Example:

她怕黑暗。

Tā pà hēi' àn

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

墨

MÒ

ink;
Chinese ink

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



墨迹
墨水
墨砚
墨鱼

mò jī
mò shuǐ
mò yàn
mò yú

ink mark
ink
inkstone
inkfish; cuttlefish

墨汁

mò zhì

prepared Chinese
ink

墨水笔

mò shuǐ bǐ

fountain pen

Example:

我喜欢用墨水笔写字。

Wǒ xǐ huān yòng mò shuǐ bǐ xiě zì.

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

点 (點)

DIǎN point; spot; dot

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



丨	卜	灬	占	占	点	点	点						
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点菜	diǎn cài	choose dishes from a menu
点滴	diǎn dī	droplet
点火	diǎn huǒ	light a fire
点名	diǎn míng	call the roll

点燃	diǎn rán	kindle
点头	diǎn tóu	nod one's head
点心	diǎn xīn	light refreshments
点缀	diǎn zhuì	decorate

Example:

他把蜡烛点燃了。

Tā bǎ là zhú diǎn rán le.

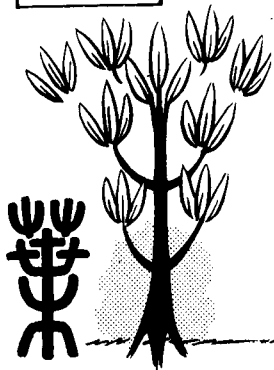
It means, "He lighted the candle."

叶

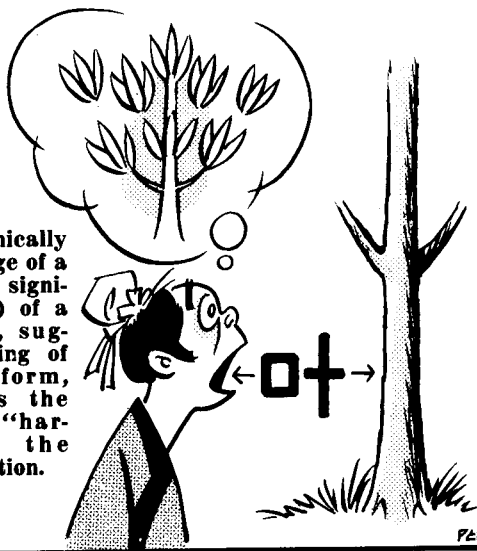
(葉)

YÈ

leaves



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



F2M4



叶柄

yè bǐng

leafstalk

叶子

yè zǐ

leaf

叶落归根

yè luò guī gēn

falling leaves settle
on their roots—a
person residing
elsewhere finally
returns to his
ancestral home

枫叶

fèng yè

maple leaf

Example:

这片叶子好大啊！

Zhè piàn yè zǐ hǎo dà à!

It means, “What a big leaf!”

花

HUĀ

flowers

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



一	十	艹	艹	花	花	花											
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花瓣	huā bàn	petal
花边	huā biān	lace
花草	huā cǎo	flowers and plants
花朵	huā duǒ	flower
花篮	huā lán	flower basket
花瓶	huā píng	vase
花圈	huā quān	wreath
花生	huā shēng	peanut
花园	huā yuán	garden

花生米	huā shēng mǐ	shelled peanut
花花公子	huā huā gōng zǐ	dandy; coxcomb; fop
花花绿绿	huā huā lǜ lǜ	colourful
花花世界	huā huā shì jiè	the dazzling human world with its myriad temptations; this mortal world

Example:

这朵花很美丽。

Zhè duǒ huā ér hěn měi lì.

It means, "This flower is very beautiful."

茶

CHÁ

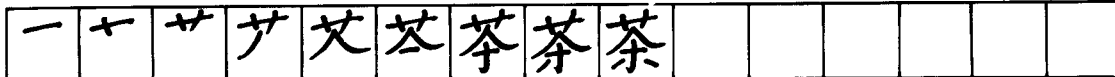
tea



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



FENG



茶杯
茶匙
茶点
茶巾
茶具
茶壶
茶会

chá bēi
chá chí
chá diǎn
chá jīn
chá jù
chá hú
chá huì

teacup
teaspoon
refreshments
tea cloth
tea-set
teapot
tea-party

茶钱
茶水
茶叶
茶座
茶园
喝茶

chá qián
chá shuǐ
chá yè
chá zuò
chá yuán
hē chá

tip
tea or boiled water
tea-leaves
tea-house
tea plantation
drink tea

Example:

我 喜 欢 喝 茶 。

Wǒ xǐ huān hē chá .

It means, "I like to drink tea."

英

YĪNG

brave;
heroic

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



PEN 6

一	十	艹	冫	英	英						
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英镑
英才

yīng bàng
yīng cái

pound sterling
person of out-
standing ability

英国
英豪
英俊
英明
英名
英文

Yīng Guó
yīng háo
yīng jùn
yīng míng
yīng míng
yīng wén

England
hero
handsome
brilliant
illustrious name
English (language)

英雄
英勇
英语
英姿

yīng xióng
yīng yǒng
yīng yǔ
yīng zī

hero
courageous
English (language)
valiant and fine-
looking

英国人
英联邦

yīng guó rén
yīng liáng bāng

Englishman
British
Commonwealth
(of Nations)

Example:

岳飞是宋朝的一位英雄人物。

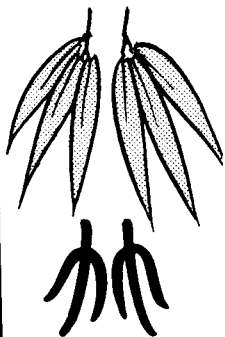
Yuè Fēi shì Sòng cháo de yí wèi yīng xióng rén wù.

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

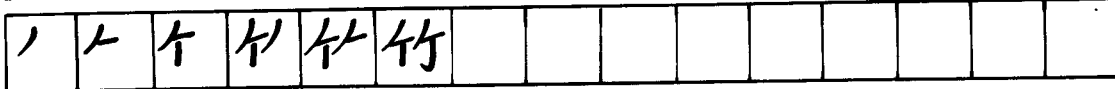
竹

ZHÚ

bamboo



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



竹竿
竹林
竹荀
竹子

zhú gān
zhú lín
zhú sǔn
zhú zi

bamboo pole
bamboo grove
bamboo shoot
bamboo

竹叶青
山竹

zhú yè qīng
shān zhú

bamboo-leaf-green
liqueur
mangosteen

Example:

这椅子是竹做的。

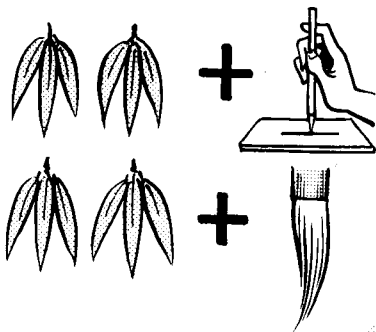
Zhè yǐ zi shì zhú zuò de.

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

笔 (筆)

Bǐ pen; pencil

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



聿 + 木 = 筆
 聿 + 毛 = 笔



丨 丿 木 木 木 木 木 笔 笔 笔

笔调	bǐ diào	(of writing) tone
笔法	bǐ fǎ	technique of writing
笔画	bǐ huà	strokes of a Chinese character
笔记	bǐ jì	notes
笔迹	bǐ jì	writing
笔尖	bǐ jiān	pen nib

笔名	bǐ míng	pseudonym
笔墨	bǐ mò	pen and ink
笔试	bǐ shì	written examination
笔误	bǐ wù	slip of the pen
笔战	bǐ zhàn	written polemics
钢笔	gāng bǐ	fountain pen
铅笔	qiān bǐ	pencil

Example:

他的笔迹很美。

Tā de bǐ jì hěn měi.

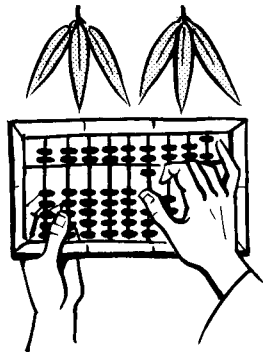
It means, "He has beautiful handwriting."

算

SUÀN

calculate; plan

算



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



算法
算命
算盘

suàn fǎ
suàn mìng
suàn pán

algorithm
fortune-telling
abacus

算术
计算

suàn shù
jì suàn

arithmetic
calculate

Example:

他的算术是班上最好的。

Tā de suàn shù shì bān shàng zuì hǎo de.

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

笑

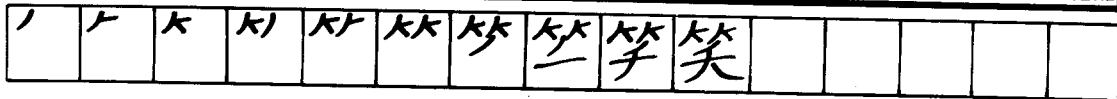
XIÀO

laugh; smile

笑 has an amusing origin. The phonetic element: 笑 depicts a man (大) inclining his head (丿) to laugh more easily, suggesting rocking or shaking. The radical component: 竹 likens such laughter to the swaying of bamboo (竹) in the breeze. But laughing or smiling is serious business, as implied in the proverb: "A man without a smiling face should not open a shop."



P214



笑柄	xiào bǐng	laughing-stock
笑话	xiào huà	joke
笑剧	xiào jù	farce
笑脸	xiào liǎn	smiling face
笑料	xiào liào	laughing-stock
笑骂	xiào mà	deride and taunt
笑容	xiào róng	smiling expression
笑哈哈	xiào hā hā	laughingly
笑面虎	xiào miàn hǔ	smiling tiger

笑嘻嘻	xiào xī xī	grinning
笑里藏刀	xiào lǐ cáng dāo	hide a dagger in a smile; (figuratively) with murderous intent behind one's smile
笑脸常开	xiào liǎn cháng kāi	put on a smiling face always
笑逐颜开	xiào zhú yán kāi	beam with smiles

Example:

他喜欢讲笑话。

Tā xǐ huān jiǎng xiào huà.

It means, "He likes to joke."

禾

HÉ

grain

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

禾
禾
禾
禾



PEML

丶	二	子	禾	禾															
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禾叉
禾虫
禾苗

hé chā
hé chóng
hé miáo

pitchfork
harvest grub
grain seedling

禾黍
禾穗

hé shǔ
hé suì

millet
a ear (of rice grain)

Example:

禾苗已经长大了。

Hé miáo yǐ jīng zhǎng dà le.

It means, “The grain seedlings have fully grown.”

秋

qiū

autumn

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



FZ114

'	二	千	禾	禾	禾	秋						
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秋波

qiū bō

bright eyes of a
beautiful woman

秋季

qiū jì

autumn season

秋千

qiū qiān

swing

秋色

qiū sè

autumn scenery

秋收

qiū shōu

autumn harvest

秋水

qiū shuǐ

autumn waters

秋天

qiū tiān

autumn

秋种

qiū zhòng

autumn sowing

春秋时代

Chūn Qiū Shí Dài

The Spring and
Autumn period
(B. C. 722-481)
in Chinese history

Example:

秋天的景色很美。

Qiū tiān de jǐng sè hěn měi.

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

秃

tū bald; bare

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



F&M4

丿	一	千	禾	秃						
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

秃笔

tū bǐ

bald writing brush—
(figuratively) poor
writing ability

秃头

tū tóu

bald head

秃子

tū zi

baldhead

光秃秃

guāng tū tū

bare; bald

秃顶

tū dǐng

bald

秃山

tū shān

barren hill

Example:

他的头光秃秃。

Tā de tóu guāng tū tū.

It means, "His head is bald."

苏 (蘇)

sū

revive



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



FZM4

一	十	艹	芳	芳	苏								
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

苏打

sū dá

soda

苏醒

sū xǐng

revive; regain
consciousness

苏丹

Sū Dān

Sultan; Sudan (in
Africa)

苏州

Sū Zhōu

Suzhou (Soo-
chow), China

苏联

Sū Lián

Soviet Union

苏格兰

Sū Gé Lán

Scotland

苏息

sū xī

rest

Example:

她 苏 醒 过 来 了 。

Tā sū xǐng guò lái le.

It means, “She has regained consciousness.”

和

HÉ

harmony; and

和



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



P2114

丿 一 禾 禾 禾 和 和 和

和蔼
和风
和服
和缓
和会
和解
和局
和暖
和平

hé ǎi
hé fēng
hé fú
hé huǎn
hé huì
hé jiě
hé jú
hé nuǎn
hé píng

amiable
gentle breeze
kimono
gentle; mild
peace conference
become reconciled
drawn game; tie
pleasantly warm
peace

和气
和尚
和约
和平共处
和颜悦色
和睦相处

hé qì
hé shàng
hé yuē
hé píng gòng chǔ
hé yán yuè sè
hé mù xiāng chǔ

friendly
Buddhist monk
peace treaty
peaceful co-existence
benign countenance or amiable manner
live harmoniously

Example:

同学们和睦相处！

Tóng xué men hé mù xiāng chǔ.

It means, "The students live harmoniously."

年

NIÁN
year

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



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



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



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

PEML

ノ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	年															
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年报	nián bào	annual report
年初	nián chū	beginning of a year
年代	nián dài	age; years; era
年底	nián dǐ	end of a year
年度	nián dù	year
年份	nián fèn	particular year
年糕	nián gāo	New Year cake made of glutinous rice flour

年关	nián guān	end of a year
年龄	nián líng	age
年迈	nián mài	aged
年年	nián nián	every year
年轻	nián qīng	young
年夜	nián yè	eve of the lunar New Year
成年	chéng nián	adult; all year round
新年	xīn nián	New Year

Example:

我很喜欢吃年糕。

Wǒ hěn xǐ huān chī nián gāo.

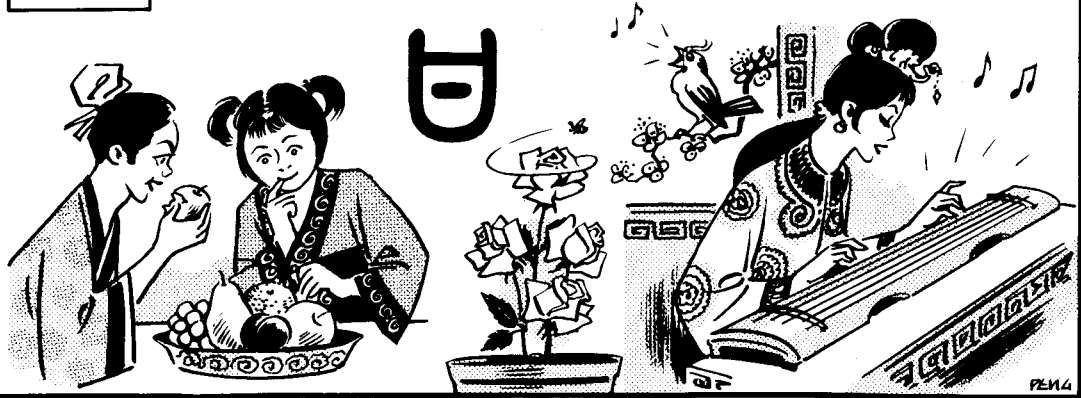
It means, "I like to eat New Year cake."

甘

GĀN

sweet

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



一 十 廿 廿 廿

甘草	gān cǎo	licorice root
甘苦	gān kǔ	weal and woe
甘露	gān lù	sweet dew
甘美	gān měi	sweet and refreshing
甘心	gān xīn	willingly; readily

甘愿	gān yuàn	readily
甘蔗	gān zhe	sugarcane
甘心情愿	gān xīn qíng yuàn	willingly and gladly
苦尽甘来	kǔ jìn gān lái	after suffering comes happiness

Example:

我 喜 欢 喝 甘 蔗 汁 。

Wǒ xǐ huān hē gān zhè zhī.

It means, “I like to drink sugarcane juice.”

香

XIĀNG

fragrant

香 香 香



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



FZM4

一 二 千 禾 禾 香 香 香

香肠
香菜
香粉
香菇
香花
香蕉
香料

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

sausage
coriander
face powder
mushroom
fragrant flower
banana
spice

香气
香水
香味
香烟
香皂
香槟酒
香喷喷

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

aroma
perfume
sweet smell
cigarette
soap
champagne
sweet-smelling

Example:

这朵花好香啊！

Zhè duǒ huā hǎo xiāng a!

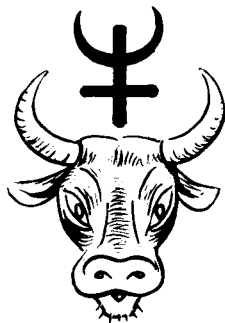
It means, "What a sweet-scented flower!"

牛

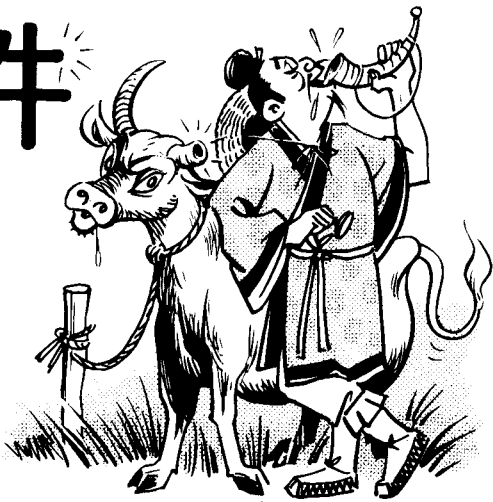
NIÚ

ox; cow; bull

牛



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



PEN4

ノ	ㄣ	ㄥ	牛								
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牛痘
牛角
牛劲
牛马

niú dòu
niú jiǎo
niú jìn
niú mǎ

cowpox
ox-horn
great strength
oxen and horses—
beasts of burden

牛奶
牛排

niú nǎi
niú pái

milk
beef steak

牛棚
牛脾气

niú péng
niú pí qì

cowshed
stubbornness;
obstinacy

牛肉
牛尾
牛仔褲

niú ròu
niú wěi
niú zǎi kù

beef
oxtail
jeans

Example:

多喝牛奶对身体有益。

Duō hē niú nǎi duì shēn tǐ yǒu yì.

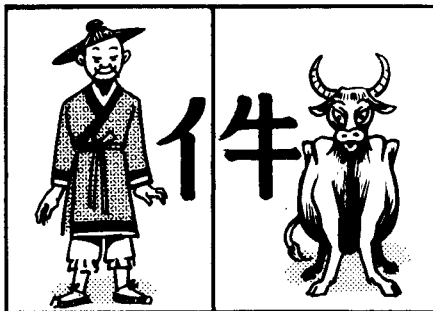
It means, "Milk is good for the health."

件

JIÀN

piece;
article;
item

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



丿	亻	牛	件								
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案件
密件

àn jiàn
mì jiàn

legal case
confidential
document

事件

shì jiàn

matter; event;
affair

文件

wén jiàn

document

一件行李

yī jiàn xíng lǐ

piece of luggage

Example:

他的抽屉里有很多机密文件。

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

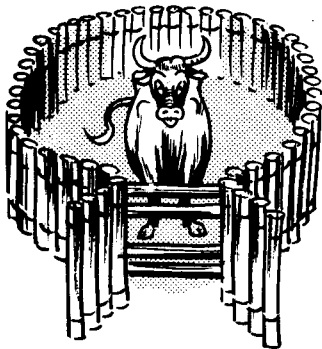
It means, "There are many confidential documents in his drawer."

牢

LÁO

cattle pen;
prison

牢 𠩺



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



PENG



牢固
牢记
牢牢
牢骚

láo gù
láo jì
láo láo
láo sāo

firm; secure
remember well
firmly; safely
grumbling;
complaint

牢狱; 监牢
牢不可破
坐牢

láo yù; jiān láo
láo bù kě pò
zuò láo

prison; jail
unbreakable
be in prison

Example:

他因犯罪而被判坐牢。

Tā yīn fàn zuì ér bèi pàn zuò láo.

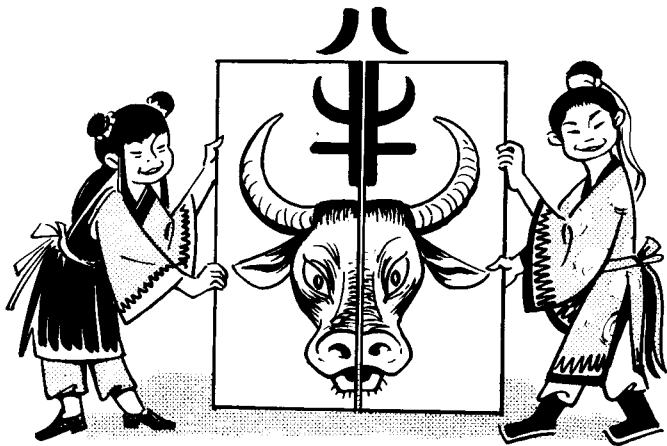
It means, "He was sentenced to jail."

半

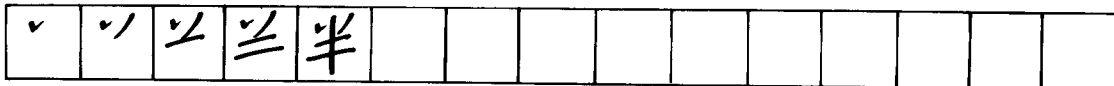
BÀN

half

THIS character originated from the butcher's practice of dividing (八) an ox (牛) into two halves, in all its length, before cutting up. 牛 was modified to 丰 to facilitate exact division. Hence: 半, meaning "half". Even though it is easy to split one ox into two halves, the saying proves true: "You cannot get two skins from one ox."



PEW



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

Example:

他做事总是半途而废。

Tā zuò shì zǒng shì bàn tú ér fèi.

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

伴

BÀN

companion;
associate;
mate

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



FENG

丿 亻 亻 亻 伴 伴 伴

伴唱 bàn chàng

vocal accompaniment

伴随 bàn suí

accompany; follow

伴侣 bàn lǚ

companion;
partner

伴奏 bàn zòu

accompany with
musical instruments

伴娘 bàn niáng

bridesmaid; maid-of-honour

做伴 zuō bàn

keep somebody
company

Example:

她唱歌时需要有人伴奏。

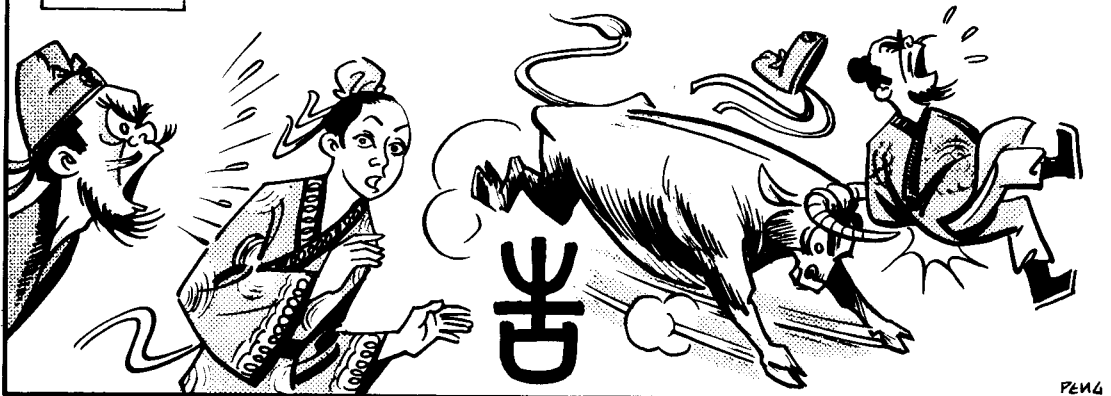
Tā chàng gē shí xū yào yǒu rén bàn zòu.

It means, "Whenever she sings, she needs instrumental accompaniment."

告

GÀOindict;
tell;
inform

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



F2N4

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

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

Example:

请你告诉我怎样去植物园？

Qǐng nǐ gào sù wǒ zěnyàng qù Zhí Wù Yuán?

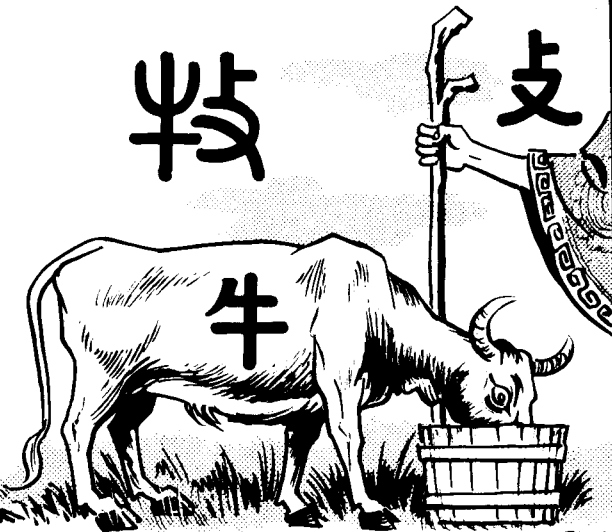
It means, "Will you please tell me the way to the Botanic Gardens?"

牧

MÙ

tend cattle

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



PE114

丿	一	牛	牛	𠂇	物	物	牧							
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

牧草
牧场
牧放
牧歌
牧民
牧区

mù cǎo
mù chǎng
mù fàng
mù gē
mù mín
mù qū

forage grass
grazing land
tend; herd
pastoral song
herdsman
pastoral area

牧师
牧童
牧业
牧羊人
游牧生活

mù shī
mù tóng
mù yè
mù yáng rén
yóu mù shēng huó

pastor; clergyman
shepherd boy
animal husbandry
shepherd
nomadic life

Example:

牧童在草原上牧羊。

Mù tóng zài cǎo yuán shàng mù yáng.

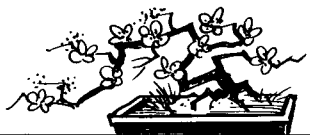
It means, "The shepherd boy is tending sheep on the plain."

肉

RÒU

flesh; meat

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



7216

丨	冂	内	内	肉	肉														
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

肉饼
肉搏
肉店
肉干
肉麻
肉排
肉片

ròu bǐng
ròu bó
ròu diàn
ròu gān
ròu má
ròu pái
ròu piàn

meat pie
fight hand-to-hand
butcher's (shop)
barbequed meat
nauseating;
disgusting
steak
sliced meat

肉体
肉丸
肉刑
牛肉
羊肉
猪肉

ròu tǐ
ròu wán
ròu xíng
niú ròu
yáng ròu
zhū ròu

human body
meatball
corporal punish-
ment
beef
mutton
pork

Example:

马来人 不吃猪肉。

Mǎ lái rén bù chī zhū ròu.

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

胖

PÀNG

fat; fleshy

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



丨 月 月 月 月 月 月 胖 胖 胖 胖

胖子
发胖

pàng zi
fā pàng

fat person
put on weight

Example:

他胖起来了。

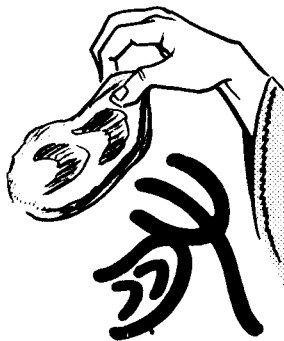
Tā pàng qǐ lái le.

It means, “He is putting on weight.”

有

yǒu

have



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



PENG

一	ナ	才	有	有	有						
---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

有功 yǒu gōng

have rendered great service

有关 yǒu guān

related to; have something to do with

有害 yǒu hài

harmful; detrimental

有理 yǒu lǐ

reasonable

有利 yǒu lì

advantageous; favourable

有力 yǒu lì

strong; powerful

有效 yǒu xiào

efficacious; valid

有机可乘 yǒu jī kě chéng

there's an opportunity to take advantage of

有利可图 yǒu lì kě tú

stand to gain

有目共睹 yǒu mù gòng dǔ

be there for all to see

有求必应 yǒu qiú bì yìng

respond to every plea

Example:

我没有汽车。

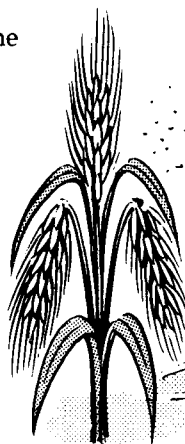
Wǒ méi yǒu qì chē.

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

来

(來) LAI
come

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



FENG



来宾
来到
来电
来访
来回
来件

来客
来临

lái bīn
lái dào
lái diàn
lái fǎng
lái huí
lái jiàn

lái kè
lái lín

guest
arrive; come
incoming telegram
come to visit
make a round trip
communication or
parcel received
guest
approach; come

来年
来生
来往
来信
来源
来自
来日方长

出来

lái nián
lái shēng
lái wǎng
lái xìn
lái yuán
lái zi
lái rì fāng cháng

chū lái

next year
next life
come and go
incoming letters
source; origin
come from
there is ample
time ahead
come out

Example:

这些水果是来自澳洲的。

Zhè xiē shuǐ guǒ shì lái zì Ào Zhōu de.

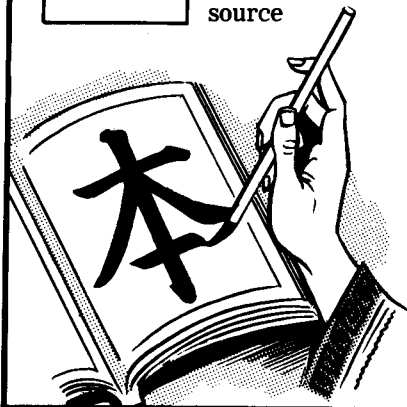
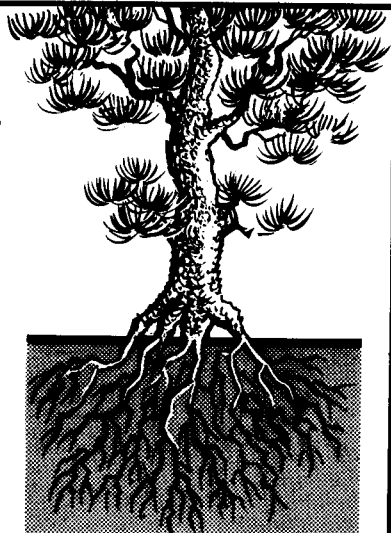
It means, "These fruits are from Australia."

本

BĚN

root;
origin;
source

本 本 本



本 is a pictograph of a tree (木) with the root and stump emphasized by a horizontal stroke, indicating the level of the earth (一). Although the root is the lowest part of the tree, it is of the highest value in its struggle for survival. With good reason, also, 本 is used as a classifier for books, the "root" of knowledge.

PLAG

一 十 才 木 本

本地
本分
本国
本行

běn dì
běn fèn
běn guó
běn háng

this locality
one's duty
one's own country
one's own
profession

本来; 原本
本领
本能

běn lái; yuán běn
běn lǐng
běn néng

originally
skill; ability
instinct

本人
本身
本文
本性
本意
本义
本质
本子

běn rén
běn shēn
běn wén
běn xìng
běn yì
běn yì
běn zhì
běn zì

I (me; myself)
itself; in itself
this text
natural instincts
original intention
original meaning
innate character
book; notebook

Example:

这件事情根本和我无关。

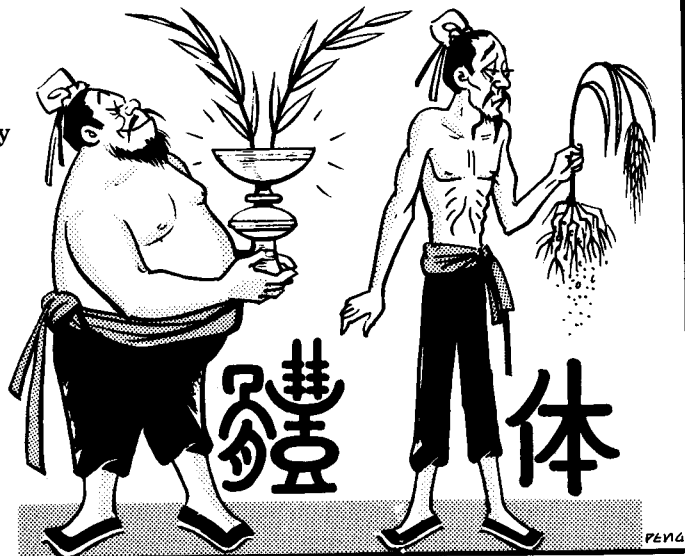
Zhè jiàn shì qíng gēn běn hé wǒ wú guān.

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

体 (體) tǐ

the body

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



ノ 亻 亻 亻 亻 体 体

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

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

Example:

他体重六十公斤。



Tā tǐ zhòng liù shí gōng jīn.

It means, "He weighs sixty kilograms."

果

GUǒ

fruit

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

果
果
果
果
果



PEW4

丨	冂	冂	日	旦	果	果								
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

果断
果敢

guǒ duàn

guǒ gǎn

resolute; decisive

resolute and
daring

果酱
果皮
果品
果然

guǒ jiàng

guó pí

guǒ pǐn

guǒ rán

jam

skin of fruit

fruit

as expected; sure
enough

果肉
果实
果树
果园
果汁
果子

guǒ ròu

guǒ shí

guǒ shù

guǒ yuán

guǒ zhī

guǒ zǐ

flesh of fruit

fruit; gain

fruit tree

orchard

fruit juice

fruit

Example:

这果汁太甜了!

Zhè guǒ zhī tài tián le!

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

巢

CHÁO

nest



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



𠂇 𠂈 𠂉 𠂊 𠂋 𠂌 𠂍 𠂎 𠂏 巢

巢穴
匪巢
鸟巢

cháo xué
fěi cháo
niǎo cháo

den; lair
bandits' lair
bird's nest

Example:

树上有一个鸟巢。

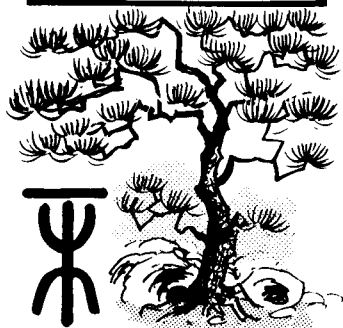
Shù shàng yǒu yí gè niǎo cháo.

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

末

MÒ

tip; end



JUST as the root (本) of a tree (木) is emphasized by a horizontal stroke (一) at its base, so the top of the tree (木) is indicated by a long horizontal line (一) at the top: 末, suggesting the tip or end - its limit. In growing upright like the tree, man also has his limit for, as the proverb puts it, "There are more trees upright than upright men."



PEN4

一 二 寸 才 末

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

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

Example:

他喜欢在周末带孩子去玩。

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

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

未

WÈI

not; not yet

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

未



PEM 6

一	二	卩	才	未									
---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

未必

wèi bì

not necessarily;
may not

未曾

wèi céng

have not; never

未定

wèi dìng

uncertain;
undecided

未婚

wèi hūn

unmarried

未来

wèi lái

future

未完

wèi wán

unfinished

未详

wèi xiáng

unknown

未知数

wèi zhī shù

unknown number

未雨绸缪

wèi yǔ chóu móu

take precautions

Example:

他对未来感到茫然。

Tā duì wèi lái gǎn dào máng rán.

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

妹

MÈI

younger sister

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

妹



PEUC

丨	女	女	女	女	妹	妹	妹						
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

妹夫

mèi fū

younger sister's
husband

表妹

biǎo mèi

younger female
cousin

妹妹

mèi mei

younger sister

Example:

我的表妹长得很漂亮。

Wǒ de biǎo mèi zhǎng de hěn piào liàng.

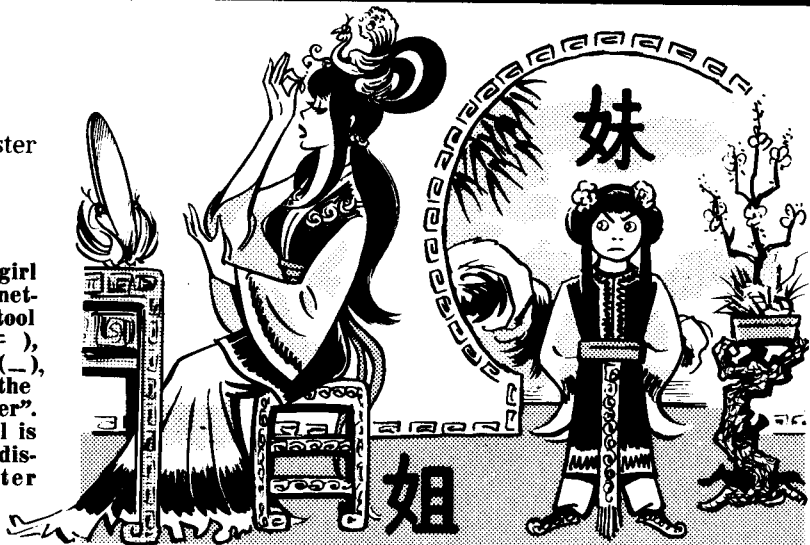
It means, "My cousin is very pretty."

姐

JIE

elder sister

女 is the radical for girl or woman. 且, the phonetic, is a picture of a stool (几) with two rungs (=), standing on the ground (一), now borrowed for the conjunction: 且“moreover”. In our picture, the stool is not the only thing that distinguishes older sister from younger sister.



P2114

ㄥ	女	女	如	如	如	姐							
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

姐夫

jiě fū

elder sister's
husband

姐妹
表姐

jiě mèi

sisters

姐姐

jiě jie

elder sister

biǎo jiě

elder female cousin

Example:

我的姐姐喜欢吃榴梿。

Wǒ de jiě jie xǐ huān chī liú lián.

It means, "My elder sister likes durians."

爱

(愛)

Ài

love;
affection

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



爱国	ài guó	patriotic	爱情	ài qíng	love (between man and woman)
爱好	ài hào	interest; hobby	爱人	ài rén	sweetheart
爱护	ài hù	cherish; take good care of	爱惜	ài xī	treasure; cherish
爱怜	ài lián	show tender affection for	爱憎	ài zēng	love and hate
爱恋	ài liàn	be in love with	爱尔兰	Ài'ěr Lán	Ireland
爱慕	ài mù	adore; admire	爱不释手	ài bù shì shǒu	fondle admiringly

Example:

小梅喜欢看爱情小说。

Xiǎo Méi xǐ huān kàn ài qíng xiǎo shuō.

It means, “Xiao Mei likes to read romances.”

想

XIǎNG

think; hope

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



FENG

一 十 才 木 禾 禾 相 相 相 相 相 相 相 想 想 想 想

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

Example:

我想我该走了。

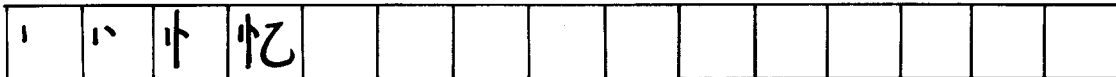
Wǒ xiǎng wǒ gāi zǒu le.

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

忆 (憶)

Yì recall; remember; reflect

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



回忆
记忆
记忆力

huí yì
jì yì
jì yì lì

recollect
remember
memory

记忆犹新 jì yì yóu xīn

remain fresh in
one's memory

Example:

我的记忆力很差。

Wǒ de jì yì lì hěn chà.

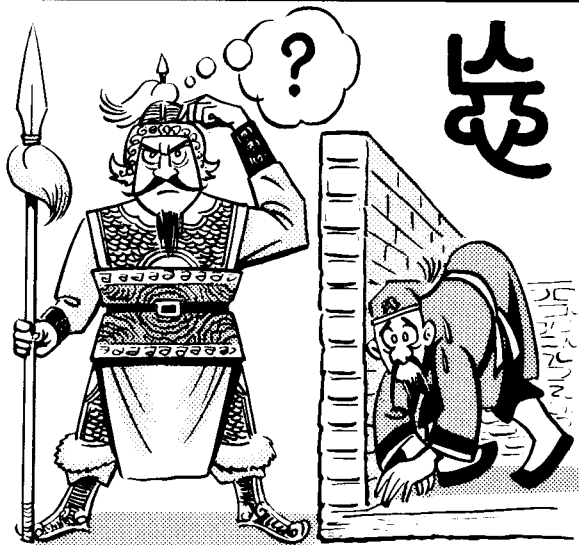
It means, "My memory is very poor."

忘

WÀNG

forget

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



FENGL

丶	亠	亡	宀	忘	忘	忘													
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

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

Example:

别忘记替我买水果。

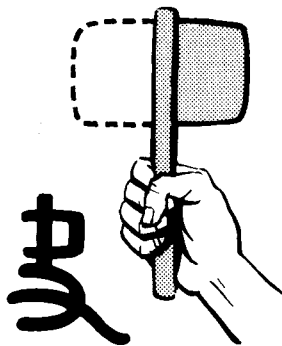
Bié wàng jì tì wǒ mǎi shuǐ guǒ.

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

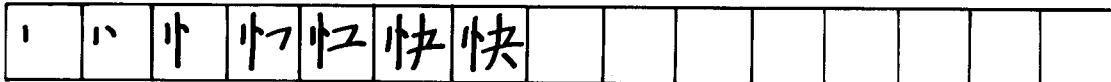
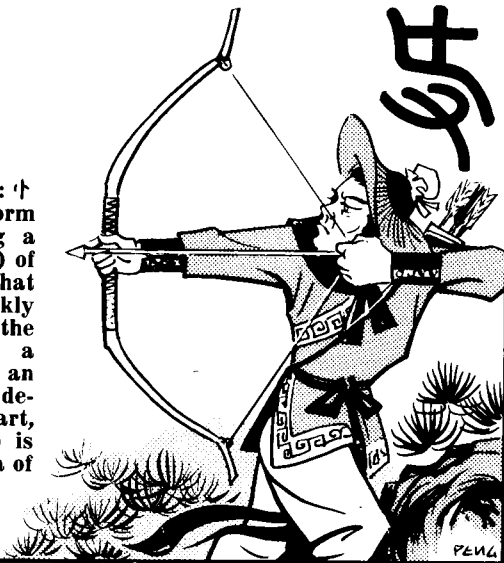
快

KUÀI

quick; fast



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



快步
快餐
快车

kuài bù
kuài cān
kuài chē

trot
quick meal; snack
express train or
bus

快感
快活

kuài gǎn
kuài huó

pleasant sensation
merry

快乐
快慢
快速

kuài lè
kuài màn
kuài sù

happy
speed
fast

快艇

kuài tǐng

speedboat

快马加鞭

kuài mǎ jiā biān

at high speed

Example:

我有一个快乐的家庭。

Wǒ yǒu yí gè kuài lè de jiā tíng.

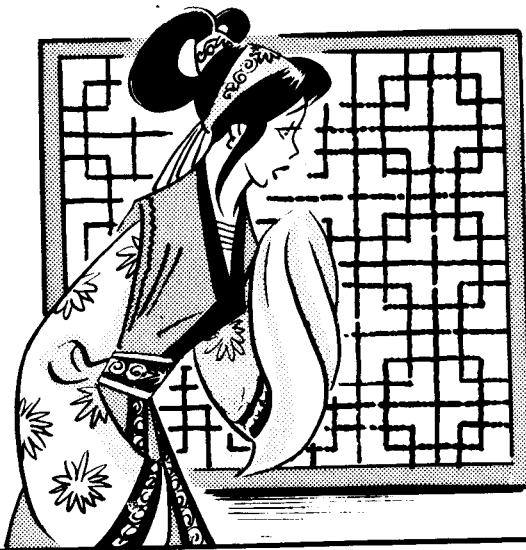
It means, "I have a happy family."

匆 (匆)

CŌNG

haste; hurry; alarm

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



匆 匆 匆 匆 匆

PEW4

ノ ㄣ ㄣ 匆 匆

匆匆
匆促
匆忙

cōng cōng
cōng cù
cōng máng

hurriedly
hastily
hastily; hurried

Example:

他匆匆吃了早餐便上学。

Tā cōng cōng chī le zǎo cān biàn shàng xué.

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