

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about Middle East

東

Pronunciation: *dong* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *dung* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: east (also see Character Builder 9 April 2008)

西方國家 (*xi fang guo jia* = west~side~state~home = western countries) call regions east of them 東方 (*dong fang* = east~side = the East/Orient): 遠東 (*yuan dong* = the Far East), 中東 (*zhong dong* = the Middle East).

This region east of the 地中海 (*di zhong hai* = land~middle~sea = Mediterranean Sea) nursed 古文明 (*gu wen ming* = ancient~language/literacy~enlightenment = ancient civilizations). 猶太教 (*you tai jiao* = “Judea”-transliterated~religion = Judaism), 基督教 (*ji du jiao* = “Christus”-transliterated~religion = Christianity), 伊斯蘭教 (*yi si lan jiao* = “Islam”-transliterated~religion = Islam) all originated here.

波斯灣 (*bo si wan* = “Persia”-transliterated~bay = Persian Gulf) states are rich in 石油 (*shi you* = rock~oil = petroleum).

by Diana Yue