

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 Buddhism

廟

Pronunciation: *miao* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *miu* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: temple

廟 (radical 广 = building), means buildings for worshipping deities: 希臘神廟 (*xi la shen miao* = Greece~god~temple, e.g. the Parthenon). The Chinese erect 宗廟 (*zong miao* = ancestor~temples), 孔廟 (*kong miao* = temple of Confucius), 天后廟 (*tian hou miao* = Heavenly~Queen/Goddess~Temple = temple for the goddess of the sea).

Buddhist monasteries are 佛寺 (*fo si*). 出家人 (*chu jia ren* = exit~home~people) means 僧尼 (*seng ni* = monks~nuns) 剃度 (*ti du* = shaved~delivered = tonsured) and severed from worldly ties.

Buddhist temples worship 彌勒佛 (*mi le fo* = Maitreya Buddha), 觀音菩薩 (*guan yin pu sa* = Avalokitesvara/Guanyin~Bodhisattva). 香火不絕 (*xiang huo bu jue* = incense~fire~no~terminate) describes a temple enjoying continuous prosperity.

by Diana Yue