

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 Tibet

藏

Pronunciation: *zang* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *jong* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: Tibet, Tibetan

Centuries ago 西藏 (*Xi Zang* = West~Zang = Tibet) was called 吐蕃 (*Tu Bo* = "Tibet"-transliterated).

西藏 is abbreviated to 藏: 藏族 (*Zang zu* = Tibetan~race), 藏語 (*Zang yu* = Tibetan~language), 藏羚羊 (*Zang ling yang* = Tibetan antelopes), 青藏鐵路 (*Qing Zang tie lu* = Qinghai~Tibet~iron~road/Railway).

Tibet was under 神權統治 (*shen quan tong zhi* = god~authority~overall~rule = theocratic rule) before Liberation. Noble families, 喇嘛 (*la ma* = lamas) and landlords exploited 農奴 (*nong nu* = farmer~slaves = serfs). Serfdom (農奴制度 *nong nu zhi du* = serfs~system) was abolished when the 西藏自治區 (*Xi Zang zhi zhi qu* = Tibet~self~govern~region = Xizang Autonomous Region) was established in 1959.

by Diana Yue