

Character Builder

您好學？

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.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about the Hui people

疆

Putonghua pronunciation: *jiang1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *geung1*

Meaning: boundary, limit, frontier, territory

疆 (radical 土 *tu3*) means area/country's 疆界 (*jiang1 jie4* = frontier-border), 疆土 (*jiang1 tu3* = territory-land). 封疆大吏 (*feng1 jiang1 da4 li4* = appointed/bestowed-territory-big-official) means territorial governor with plenipotentiary status. 疆場 (*jiang1 chang3* = border-field) = battlefield.

In 18th-19th centuries, Qing dynasty defeated rebels and czarist Russia, controlled 回疆 (*Hui2 jiang1* = Hui-territory), China's northwestern 邊疆 (*bian1 jiang1* = frontier-territory) inhabited by 回族 (Hui-tribes/people).

In 1884, accepting military commander 左宗棠 (*Zuo3 Zong1 Tang2* = Zuo Zongtang = General Tso)'s proposal, Qing dynasty established 新疆省 (*Xin1 Jiang1 sheng3* = new-frontier-territory-province = Xinjiang province), which became 新疆維吾爾自治區 (*Xin1 Jiang1 Wei2 Wu2 Er3 Zi4 Zhi4 Qū1* = Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region) in 1955.

by Diana Yue