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

Pronunciation: hui (Putonghua, 2\textsuperscript{nd} tone), wooi (Cantonese, 4\textsuperscript{th} tone)
Basic meaning: Hui people, Islamic religion

回族 (Hui zu = Hui-ethnic-tribe) in China are 穆斯林 (mu si lin = “Muslims”-transliterated). 回教 (Hui jiao = Hui-people’s-religion) means 伊斯兰 (yi si lan = “Islam”-transliterated).

Muslims worship 真主 (zhen zhu = True-God) 安拉 (an la = “Allah”-transliterated), 先知 (xian zhi = before-know = prophet) 穆罕默德 (mu han mo de = “Muhammed”-transliterated), study 古蘭經 (gu lan jing = “Qoran”-transliterated-scriptures), 祈祷 (qi dao = ask-pray = pray) in 清真寺 (qing zhen si = pure-true-monastery = mosques), 沐浴 (mu yu = wash-bath = perform ablution), observe 齋月 (zhai yue = fast-month = Ramadan).

朝聖 (chao sheng = travel-to-worship-holiness = pilgrimage) to 麥加 (mai jia = “Mecca”-transliterated) is every Muslim’s dream.

by Diana Yue