Character Builder

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

經 (jing) Pronunciation: jing (Putonghua, 1st tone), ging (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: classic, scripture, sutra

經緯 (jing wei) = warp-weft or longitude-latitude, hence 經 means authority/classic. The Christian Bible is called 聖經 (sheng jing = holy-classic). The Qoran is transliterated as 古蘭經 (gu lan jing). The Five Classics of Confucianism (五經 wu jing = five-classics) include 詩經 (shi jing = Book of Poetry), 易經 (yi jing = Book of Change = the I Ching).

The famous monk 唐三藏 (tang san zang = Tang Dynasty’s Tripitaka) translated many 佛經 (fo jing = Buddhism-scriptures = sutras) from Sanskrit into Chinese, e.g. 心經 (xin jing = heart-scripture = Heart Sutra).

天經地義 (tian jing di yi = heaven-authority-earth-significance) describes something indisputably rightful/deserving. 正經 (zheng jing = orthodox-classic) describes a person’s decent/prim behavior.

by Diana Yue