

CHINESE CHARACTERS

木 鳥

家 舟

*Their origin, etymology, history,
classification and signification.*

By Dr. L. Wieger, S. J.

LESSON 1.

About the primitive —, a single stroke.

A 一

I¹ represents the unity, principle of numeration; 爲記數之始。It figures the primordial unity, source of all beings; 惟初太始、道立於一、造分天地、化成萬物。一也者、萬物之本也。— It is the 1st radical in K'ang-hsi's dictionary.

In composition, says the Shuo-wên, — is most commonly symbolic; 凡从一之字、多指事。Its different symbolic meanings may be summed up under four principal categories.

Firstly, when written on top of the compound, — represents either heaven, or a roof, or any cover. Example:

B 雨 甫

Yü³. The rain. Drops of water falling from a 云 cloud that hangs to — heaven; J means the vertical falling; 一像天、云像雲。水从雲下也。— It is the 173rd radical in K'ang-hsi.

C 天 天

Tien¹. Heaven, the vast — extent of space that is above 大 men, the highest of things; 天賴也。至高無上、从一大會意。按大猶人也。天在人上、仰首見之。— 指事。Note that 大 (L. 60) means man and not great; therefore do not translate 一大 the unique great. The derived idea, as explained by all the commentators, is that of physical or moral superiority. The 春秋 Ch'un-ch'u says: 天之言鎮也。居高理下、爲人經緯。故其字一大以鎮之也。Placed above them, heaven governs men... According to this fundamental notion any superior, says the 爾雅 Erh-ya, is the 天 of the inferior; 天君也。凡至尊重者皆是。故臣於君、子於父、妻於夫、皆曰天。— For the compounds of 天, see Lesson 60 C.

D 末 来

Mo⁴. The outmost twigs, the — top of a 木 tree; 木上曰末。从木、—在其上。指事。— Phonetic series 138.

Secondly, placed below the compound, — represents the foundation, the base, or any support. Examples:

E 旦 旦

F 立 夂

G 本 木

Thirdly, — represents a barrier, a hindrance. Examples:

H 門 門

I ㄦ ㄦ

Fourthly, — represents something contained. Example:

J 血 显

Tan⁴. The dawn, the beginning of the day. The 日 sun above a — line, viz. the horizon; 明也。从日見一上。— 地也。— Phonetic series 162.

Li⁴. To stand, to be erected. A man 大 (L. 60) standing upon — the ground. This character is the reverse of 天, above C. 从大立一之上、會意。大人也、一地也。指事。It forms the 117th radical in K'ang-hsi. Phonetic series 134.

Pen³. The trunk of a tree. The part of a 木 tree above the — earth. This character is the reverse of 末, above D 木下曰本。从木、—在其下。指事。— Phonetic series 147.

Shuan¹. A beam — used to bolt a 門 door.

Ch'iao³. Difficulty in breathing, oppression; 气欲舒出、上礙於一也。按ㄦ像气形、一指事。The line bent up represents the breath that tries to go out, but is checked by the transversal barrier. See L. 58. — Phonetic series 3.

Hsüeh³. Blood. A 皿 vase containing — something. This character primitively meant the oblation of the blood of the victim in the sacrifices; 从皿、—指事。祭所薦牲血也。See the 詩經, Legge's edition, Part II, Bk VI, Ode VI, 5, 取其血誓。箋血以告殺也。The modern signification, *blood*, is a derivative, chuan-chu. See Lesson 157. — It forms the 143rd radical in K'ang-hsi. — Phonetic series 208.

CARACTÈRES CHINOIS

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RÉN HOMME

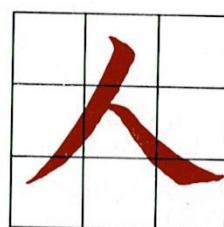


Le caractère qui indique l'*homme*, depuis la première forme pictographique jusqu'à la graphie actuelle, met en relief la principale caractéristique de l'être humain : la position érigée. L'évolution du signe indique que l'on est passé, de la forme initiale dans laquelle l'homme est vu de profil avec la tête, les mains et les pieds mis en évidence, à la forme actuelle dans laquelle l'homme est vu de face, les jambes écartées. Cette position, commune à tant de peuples, utilisée souvent aussi de nos jours dans l'action théâtrale, exprime le pouvoir, la supériorité, le commandement, l'assurance et la dignité.

Un proverbe chinois affirme : « L'homme est jugé par son vêtement, le cheval par la selle. » Cela nous fait comprendre combien le Chinois attache d'importance à la forme et au comportement. Si dans un caractère nous trouvons l'*homme* près de la *rizière*, cela signifie qu'il envisage de la *louer*. Quand notre caractère est au contraire à côté de celui de la *station debout*, il indique *fierté, dignité et position sociale*. Inversement, voisin de celui de *chien*, il veut dire *se prosterner, être*



人



佃 diàn *louer*

位 wèi *position*

伏 fú *se prosterner*

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The Straits Times Collection
FUN WITH CHINESE CHARACTERS



子

zi
infant;
child;
son

This character for child originated from a representation of an infant with outstretched arms and legs. Eventually it was modified to one with legs swaddled in cloth bands. Evidently, to the Chinese parent, the secret of infant care lies in keeping one end wet and the other end dry.



PENG

了子

子弹	<u>zǐ dàn</u>
子弟	<u>zǐ dì</u>
子女	<u>zǐ nǚ</u>
子孙	<u>zǐ sūn</u>

bullet
young generations
children
descendants

子夜	zǐ yè
子音	zǐ yīn
子子孙孙	zǐ zǐ sūn sūn
孩子	hái zǐ

midnight
consonant
descendants
child

Example:

这个孩子很聪明。

Zhè gè hái zǐ hěn cōng míng.

It means, "This child is very intelligent."