

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

族

Pronunciation: *zu* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *juk* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: species, tribe, clan, race, nationality

族 means species/clan. Aquariums are 水族箱 (*shui zu xiang* = aquatic-species-box). Office-workers are 上班族 (*shang ban zu* = go-shift-tribe). In feudal China, treason was punished by 誅九族 (*zhu jiu zu* = execute-nine-clans = all clan members beheaded).

民族 (*min zu*) = people/race: 猶太民族 (*you tai min zu* = "Jew"-transliterated-race), 阿拉伯民族 (*a la bo min zu* = "Arab"-transliterated-race). Ethnic minorities are 少數民族 (*shao shu min zu* = few-number-nationalities).

五族共和 (*wu zu gong he* = five-nationalities-together-harmony) means 漢 (*Han*), 滿 (*Man* = Manchurians), 蒙 (*Meng* = Mongolians), 回 (*Hui* = 維吾爾 *Wei wu er* = Uigurs), 藏 (*Zang* = Tibetans) live harmoniously, a Chinese state policy upheld since 1911.