The opening lines of Sānguó yànyì [三國演義], a title that is traditionally translated as The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, a popular historical narrative attributed to Luó Guànzhōng [14th century]. It deals with a period more than 1000 years before the author lived, after the collapse of the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), when kingdom competed against kingdom and the heroes Liú Bèi, Guān Yú and Zhāng Fēi swore brotherhood in a peach garden behind Zhāng Fēi’s farm (supposedly, on the outskirts of modern-day Chengdu). Part of their vow reads:

不求同年同月同日生，但願同年同月同日死.
bù qiú tóngnián tóngyuè tóngrì shēng, dàn yuàn tóngnián tóngyuè tóngrì sǐ
not choose same year, month day born, but desire same year, month day die
‘We could not help our separate births, but on the self-same day we mean to die!’

4.1 First Set

有 没 只 两 岁 出
yǒu méi zhǐ liǎng suì chū
have; not[have] only two; ounce go out; exit

4+2, 1+5  3+4  3+2  2+6  4+9  2+3, 1+4

(没)

There is/are only two; ounce years [old] go out; exit
Notes and hints

a) Both 有 and 在 (‘existence’ and ‘location’) begin with the same two strokes. 没 ~ 没 is also read mò with the meaning ‘sink; drown’, which accounts for the presence of the water radical; its extension to the negative is, presumably, a result of borrowing rather than a semantic extension from ‘sink’ to ‘not have’.

b) 两/兩 derives from a drawing of a balance (or pair of scales). The innards of the fǎntízi and jiāntízi differ; the first has 入, which is also assigned as radical, but the second has 人, which is not the assigned radical. (Instead, the first stroke of the simplified character – the horizontal -- is the assigned radical.)

c) 岁 is a compound character whose two elements 步 and 戈 are superimposed, with the first graph bisected; the top half, 止, is the assigned radical. The simplified form, 歲, is still compound (with 山 over 夕), and though the two have no part in common, the traditional and the simplified still have a family resemblance.

d) 兄 ‘older brother’ only appears in certain compounds, eg 兄弟 ‘brothers’. Its counterpart is 姐 姐 ‘older sister’ that appears in the compound 姊妹 ‘sisters’. 姐 and 姉 are both phonosemantic graphs, with radical 女 (nǚzìpáng) and [near] phonetics 且 qiě and 未 wèi.

e) 地 is a third character to show 也 as right-side element; cf. 她 and 他. 也 does not seem to play a phonetic role in any of them. 地 exhibits the combining form of 土 tǔ ‘earth’, known as tǔzìpáng in its common radical form.

f) 出 appears in the expression 出生 ‘be born’.

4.1.1 Phrases

什麼地方    沒人    兩個    三歲    出生

shénme dìfang    méi rén    liǎng ge    sān suì    chūshēng
只有一個  有幾個  有哥哥  沒弟弟  姐妹  
zhí yǒu yì ge  yǒu jǐ ge  yǒu gēge  méi di di  jiēmèi

兄弟  二十歲  只有三歲  那個地方  沒有老師 
xiōngdì  èrshí suì  zhǐ yǒu sān suì  nèi ge difang  méiyōu lǎoshī

地方不大  沒學生  出國  都有嗎  叫什麼 
dìfang hěn dà  méi xuésheng  chūguó  dōu yǒu ma  jiào shénme

4.1.2 Dialogues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一 你有兄弟姐妹嗎？</td>
<td>有個弟弟，十八歲。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪個大學？</td>
<td>北大。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>二 你是什麼地方人？</td>
<td>中國人。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中國什麼地方？</td>
<td>昆明。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>昆明很美！</td>
<td>是，地方很美。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三 白老師，學生多不多？</td>
<td>很多。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有美國的嗎</td>
<td>美國的沒有；有一個英國的，也有很多日本的。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>四 她是哪個大學的？</td>
<td>南大。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>南大？她不是天津人嗎？</td>
<td>天津的南開 [kāi]大學也叫南大。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O,有兩個南大！</td>
<td>是，南京大學是南大，南開大學也是南大。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>五 你有兄弟姐妹嗎？</td>
<td>只有一個弟弟。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他多大？</td>
<td>二十八歲。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>都是中国人吗？</td>
<td>都是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有没有女的？</td>
<td>女的没有，男的有。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有很多男的吗？</td>
<td>很多，都是男的。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>没有兄弟姐妹的</td>
<td>很多。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中国人多不多？</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他也是美国人吗？</td>
<td>不，他是中国人</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exercise 1.**
Practice presenting the information given in the table below (written in the simplified set). Despite some new characters, the titles to each column should be self-explanatory; 年龄 (traditional 年龄) niánlíng is the word for ‘age’ that usually appears on forms. The names with new characters are: 小林友美 Xiǎolín Yǒuměi; 李爱华 Lǐ Àihuá; 周云 Zhōu Yún; and 毛大为 Máo Dàwéi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>姓名</th>
<th>出生地</th>
<th>年龄</th>
<th>兄弟姐妹</th>
<th>大学</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>林美</td>
<td>北京</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>哥哥（一）</td>
<td>北大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>王学英</td>
<td>南京</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>姐姐（一）</td>
<td>南大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>小林友美</td>
<td>东京</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>姐姐（一）</td>
<td>南大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>李爱华</td>
<td>英国</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>人大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>周云</td>
<td>台北</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>哥哥（一）</td>
<td>台大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>毛大为</td>
<td>美国</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>弟弟（二）</td>
<td>MIT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 2.
Write out in characters (either set):

1. Lin Mei’s Chinese, from Beijing; she’s 35, has a brother and is a teacher at Peking University.

2. Wang Xueying is also a teacher. He’s from Nanjing, has an older sister and a younger brother; he’s a teacher at Nanjing University.

3. Xiaolin Youmei’s name has 4 characters – it’s a Japanese name. She’s from Tokyo. She’s only 19. She has an older sister who’s 28. She’s a student at Nanjing University.

4. Zhou Yun is from Taibei. She’s 40, with an older brother and two younger sisters. She’s a teacher at Taiwan University.

4.2 Second Set

錢 塊 元 （角） 分 少

| 8+8  | 3+10 | 2+2 | 7+0 | 2+2 | 3+1 |

錢 塊 (圓) （角）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5+5</th>
<th>3+4</th>
<th>yuán  (dollar)</th>
<th>7+0</th>
<th>jiǎo  (dime)</th>
<th>fēn  M (cent);  divide</th>
<th>shǎo  be few</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>qián money</td>
<td>kuài M (dollar) [formal]</td>
<td></td>
<td>jiǎo M (dime) [formal]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

就 外 太 吧 我 百

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3+9 ~ 2+10</th>
<th>3+2</th>
<th>3+1</th>
<th>3+4</th>
<th>4+3 ~ 1+6</th>
<th>5+1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jiù  then; that is to say; precisely</td>
<td>wài  outside; foreign</td>
<td>tài  too; very; grand</td>
<td>ba concensus; suggestion</td>
<td>wǒ  I; me</td>
<td>bāi  100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes

a) 錢, the noun for ‘money’, contains 金 jīn ‘metal; gold; money’ as radical, and stacked 戈 gē ‘spears’ (cf. 國, 幾, 我) – ‘spears to guard the gold’. 金 jīn means currency in expressions such as 美金 ‘US dollars’.

b) 塊 kuài, with 土 tǔ ‘earth’ as radical and 鬼 guǐ ‘ghost’ as phonetic (apparently derived from a drawing of a being with a large, grotesque head), has a core meaning of ‘lump’ or ‘piece’. The original kuài were lumps of metal used as currency. The simplified character substitutes the phonetic element seen in 快 kuài ‘fast’ for the more complicated 鬼。

c) While kuài, máo and fēn are the units of currency for the colloquial levels of the spoken language, currency, bills, ledgers, menus and other kinds of printed matter generally use the formal words 圓 yuán, 角 jiǎo and fēn (the last unchanged). 圓 is written with either the graph 元 (whose root meaning is ‘primary’) or 圓 (root meaning ‘round’); jiǎo is written 角/角. [The Japanese unit of currency, the yen, appears in Japanese as 圓.]

d) Terms for currencies include: 人民幣 Rénmínbi (RBI); 美金 Měijīn or 美元 Měiyuán ($) – the latter more common on the Mainland; 新台幣 Xīntáibì ‘new Tai[wan] currency’ (NT$); 英鎊 Yīngbàng (£), etc.

e) 分 fēn has 八 ‘8’ as radical (with a connection to the notion of ‘divide’) and 刀 dāo ‘knife’, hence ‘divide; division’ and ‘cent’ – the smallest division.

f) Distinguish 小 xiǎo ‘be small’ (小姑) from 少 shǎo ‘be few; be less’ (多少).

ɡ) Though there is no simplified form for 就 jiù, the two sets assign it different radicals. In the traditional set, ‘尤 without the dot’ is radical; in the simplified, it is the first 2 strokes.

h) Distinguish 太 tài, 大 dà (and 犬 quǎn, an older word for ‘dog’); cf. 太太 tàitāi ‘wife; Mrs.’ [Taiwan].

i) 外, with 夕 ‘evening’, suggests ‘the moon outside the wall, 卜’.

j) 百 bài is assigned 白 bái (‘white; surname’) as radical – though it could also be regarded as a phonetic element. 白 consists of 口 as radical and 巴 bā as a phonetic.
4.2.1 Phrases

三塊錢 十塊錢 八圓 十二塊 一百塊 三元

sān kuài qián shí kuài qián bā yuán shí’èr kuài yī bǎi kuài sān yuán

兩毛 四塊八 三分錢 九塊七毛 兩毛二 三元八角

liǎng máo sì kuài bā sān fēn qián jiǔ kuài qī máo liǎng máo èr sān yuán bā jiǎo

不少 多少 我就是 不太大 三塊吧 美元

bù shǎo duōshào wǒ jiù shì bú tài dà sān kuài ba Měi yuán

4.2.2 Dialogues.
(For names of currencies, see note d above.)

一 美國錢叫美金，是嗎? 在中國也叫美元。

那，中國錢叫什麼? 中國錢叫人民幣。

中國錢有元角分吧。是，角就是毛，圓就是塊，分就是分。

台灣也是人民幣嗎? 不，台灣的是台幣。

一塊美金是八塊人民幣。是，一塊是八塊。

那，一百塊人民幣是十二三塊美金吧。是，差不多十二塊。
二 你有多少錢？
不多。
他們有沒有錢？
沒有。
學生都沒錢。
有多少學生？
有三十個。
有老師嗎？
只有一個老師。
一個老師三十個學生。
三十一個人。

4.2.3 Simplified
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 两百多块钱！为什么这么多？</td>
<td>不多，一个五十块，那四个两百。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 他们是不是西安来的？</td>
<td>不，他们都是广东人。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 今天是我弟弟的生日！</td>
<td>他多大了？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>没有妹妹，只有姐姐。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>一个弟弟，一个姐姐。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>是。姐姐十二岁。你呢？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>你有兄弟姐妹吗？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>没有，就是我一个人！</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 钱那个字为什么有金子旁？</td>
<td>金就是钱！</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>金是钱吗？那，块为什么是土字旁？土不是钱。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>钱币，美金，土地？？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>就是了！</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 3.

a) Write Chinese equivalents (in characters):

1. $3 is too much, $2 is too little.
2. 84 yuan is US$10.
3. Japanese money is called ‘yen’.
4. They’re 5 cents each.
5. None of them has much money.
6. Are there any foreigners [here]?
7. There are lots of men, [but] not so many women at Qīnhuá [Daxue].

b) As before, write out the following in characters (either set) without looking, covering up as you go:

jiǔshí > jiùshi > dōu shì > duōshào > yí yuè > yì yuán > yì bāi > xìng Bái > jǐ kuài >
Měiyuán > méi qián > sān suì > shì shí > jiémèi > jiào shénme > Zhōu lǎoshī

4.3 The five elements

The 三字經 Sān Zì Jīng (‘Three Character Classic’) is a calligraphy primer (written in Classical Chinese) that also serves as an elementary guide to Chinese philosophy and history. It was written in the 13th century and was recited and copied by Chinese school children for many hundreds of years. Lines 65-68 read as follows:

曰水火 Yuē shuǐ huǒ speak water fire
木金土 mù jīn tǔ, wood metal earth
此五行 cǐ wǔ xíng, these five ‘agents’
本乎数 běn hú shù, root in numbers

Note the first character, 口 yuē, which often begins quotations in Classical Chinese, is horizontal, while the character 日 rì ‘sun; day’ is vertical.

In Chinese cosmology, 一 ‘one’ represents a pre-cosmic whole, which divided into the 二 ‘two’ that was the basis for the material universe (陰陽 yīn/yáng and other dualisms). 二, in turn, gave rise to the 五行 (wǔxíng) ‘five agents’: water, fire, wood, metal and earth. The characters that represent these words – all possible radicals -- are shown in the row below. You should learn to write them and recite them.
As independent characters, none of the five has a simplified form. As elements within a character, however, they undergo varying degrees of accommodation depending on the position they occupy within the compound character. So, for example, in the simplified set, 金 appears as 钅 when on the left (jīnzīpáng), but as a squat version of 金 when underneath. The combining forms are all illustrated below, with traditional on the left and simplified on the right:

江/江 炒/炒 杯/杯 鋼/钢 地/-
漿/浆 熱/热 案/案 鉴/鉴 堅/坚

4.4 Talking about Chinese characters

a) Identifying a character:
水, 火

Di-yī ge zì, zěnme shuǐ?
‘Shuǐ’.

Di-èr ge ge ne?
Di-èr ge shì ‘huǒ’.

How do you say the 1st character?
‘Shui’.

And the 2nd?
The 2nd is ‘huo’.

Zěnme niàn?
‘Sān kuài’.

Hái yǒu ne?
‘Sān kuài si máo wǔ.’

How’s [it] read?
Hm, ‘san kuai’.

And what else?
‘San kuai si mao wu.’
幣 ‘Rénminbi’ de ‘bi’ the ‘bi’ of ‘RMB’
少 ‘duōshao’ de ‘shāo’ the ‘shao’ of ‘duoshao’
小 ‘Dàxiǎo’ de ‘xiǎo’ zěnme xiě? How do you write the ‘xiao’ of ‘daxiao’?

b) Number of strokes (bǐhuàr)

元 ‘Yuán’ nèi ge zì yǒu jǐ ge bǐhuàr? How many strokes in the character ‘yuan’?
Yǒu sì ge. There are 4.
‘Wǒ’ yǒu qī ge. ‘Wo’ has 7.

c) Radicals (bù<shǒu>)

都 ‘Dōu’ de bùshǒu shì shénme? What’s the radical of ‘dou’?
‘Dōu’ shì yòu’ěrduō ~ páng. ‘Dou’ is the ‘right ear’.
很 ‘Hěn’ nèige zì de bùshǒu shì shénme? What’s the radical of the character ‘hen’?
shénme?
Shì shuānglìrén ~ shuāngrénpáng. It’s the ‘double man radical’.
Exercise 4.

a) Translate the questions into English:

1. 姓陈的不是你的学生？

2. 那个字不是西南的西，是中文系的系

3. 我没有很多钱，只有两三块。

4. 我妈妈的老师就是那个学生的哥哥。

5. 北京大学的学生很多生在北京，可是也有很多生在外国。

b) Fill in the blanks with appropriate words (written in characters):

1. 外國大學__很多十五歲__學生嗎？

2. 在美國上大學，一__月五百__錢—美金。

3. 美國的大學生__有很多錢嗎？/不一 定，__多大學生沒有錢。

4. 日本人的名字都有四個字嗎？/很多有四個字，可是四個字的名字不是日本人__！美國人__有四個字的名字！

5. 那個大學很__，有三百個__師，一萬個學生。