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 management

管
Pronunciation: guan (Putonghua, 3rd tone), goon (Cantonese, 2nd tone)  Basic meaning: control, manage, regulate

Parents 管教 (guan jiao = control-teach = discipline-educate) children. Governments exercise 管治 (guan zhi = control-rule = administration). Confucianism preaches 齊家治國 (qi jia zhi guo = regulate-family-rule-state = setting house/family and then country in order).

Enterprises hire 企業管理碩士 (qi ye guan li shuo shi = enterprise-management-big-scholar) = Master of Business Administration = MBAs. Dictators order 軍管 (jun guan = military-control) to stop riots.

After WWII the Chinese Nationalist Government, the British Government and the Hong Kong Government all abandoned jurisdiction of 九龍城寨 (Jiu Long Cheng Zhai = the Kowloon Walled City), leaving it a 三不管地帶 (san bu guan di dai = three-no-control-land-strip = no man’s land = lawless area) until 1994.

by Diana Yue