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 race

族

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

族 = 種族 (zhong zu = seed/ethnic-tribe), 民族 (min zu = people-race). 閃族 (Shan zu = “Semitic”-transliterated-race) = Semites. 家族 (jia zu = families-clans) keep 族譜 (zu pu = family/clan-notation = family lineage charts).

五族共和 (wu zu gong he = five-races-together-harmony) means peaceful co-existence of 漢 (Han race/people), 滿 (Man, Manchurians), 蒙 (Meng, Mongolians), 回 (Hui = 維吾爾 Wei Wu Er, Uighurs), 藏 (Zang, Tibetans) in China. Han and 少數民族 (shao shu min zu = few-number-people-race = non-Han ethnic minorities) are 兄弟民族 (xiong di min zu = elder-brother-younger-brother-people-race = brothers/family).

種族歧視 (zhong zu qi shi = seed-race-sideways/incorrect-look = racial discrimination) culminates in 滅族 (mie zu = eliminate-race = genocide).

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