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.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each zi is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest

To pronounce each zi below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about Qing Dynasty

**彊**

Putonghua pronunciation: **jiang1**
Cantonese pronunciation: **geung1**
Meanings: boundary, border, frontier, limit, territory

彊 means border/territory: fields’彊界 (jiang1 jie4 = territorial-boundaries), country’s 彊土 (jiang1 tu3 = border-land = national territory). Army/navy guard 邊彊 (bian1 jiang1= frontier-territories), 海彊 (hai3 jiang1 = sea/ocean-territories).

Unfortunately soldier 戰死彊場 (zhan4 si3 jiang1 chang3 = fight-dead- territory-field = die fighting on battlefield).

Qing Dynasty conquered northwestern 彊域 (jiang1 yu4 = territory-region = region), named it 新彊 (Xin1 Jiang1 = new-region = Xinjiang), also called 回彊 (Hui2 jiang1 = Hui-territory) because population was 回族 (Hui2 zhu2 = Hui-race) worshipping 回教 (Hui2 jiao4 = Chinese-Islamic-religion).

封疆大吏 (feng1 jiang1 da4 li4 = bestowed-territory-big-official) means imperially-appointed high official ruling region/province. Subjects wish emperor 萬壽無疆 (wan4 shou4 wu2 jiang1 = ten-thousand-age-no-limit = everlasting longevity).

by Diana Yue