

Good Characters

That's who we are; that's what we do.

goodcharacters.com

December 10, 2019

Good Characters announces the Chinese Character of the Year 2019

[December 10] Good Characters, the California-based naming consultancy that specializes in Chinese languages, announces 亂 (luàn, pronounced *lwahn*) as the Chinese Character of the Year 2019 for America.

A large, bold, black Chinese character '亂' (luàn) is displayed on the right side of the image. The character is written in a traditional, calligraphic style with thick, expressive strokes. It consists of a top radical '亂' (chaos) and a bottom radical '亂' (chaos), which together form the character '亂' (chaos). The character is positioned to the right of the main text block.

A Brief History

In 1995, the Japanese Kanji Proficiency Society began its annual announcement of the kanji of the year. Kanji are the Chinese characters adapted for the Japanese language. “Kanji,” quite literally, translates to — kan-: “Han Chinese” and –ji: “characters.”

December 12 was pronounced “Kanji Day,” the date the society announces its annual Kanji of the Year because 1212 can be read as いい字一字 (ii ji ichi ji), literally “good character one character,” meaning “one good character” in Japanese.

Eleven years later, in 2006, the Chinese character of the year began to be announced annually in China. A few years later, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Macao, and finally, Hong Kong each started to choose its own Chinese character of the year. The Character of the Year is something like Time magazine's Person of the Year — an image selected toward the year's end that reflects, or sums up, many of the main events, thoughts, and attitudes of the year.

In 2017, after another 11 years had passed, Good Characters, as Chinese language brand naming specialists, thought it would be fitting to designate a Chinese character of the year from the American perspective.

“We thought it would be fitting that there should be a Chinese character of the year from the American perspective,” Andy Chuang, Chinese naming expert and founder of Good Characters, said. “After all, Chinese is the third most-spoken language at home in the United States according to the U.S. Census Bureau.”

The Good Characters
Chinese Character of
the Year 2017 for
America was 狂
(kuáng).



The Good Characters
Chinese Character of
the Year 2018 for
America was 戰 (zhàn,
pronounced *jahn*).



Chinese Character of the Year 2019

The Good Characters Chinese Character of the Year 2019 for America is 亂 (luàn, pronounced *lwahn*).

Why have we chosen 亂 (luàn)?

A large, bold, black Chinese character '亂' (luàn) is displayed on the right side of the slide. The character is written in a traditional, calligraphic style with thick strokes and a slight curve at the bottom right. It consists of a top radical '亂' (luàn) and a bottom radical '亂' (luàn).

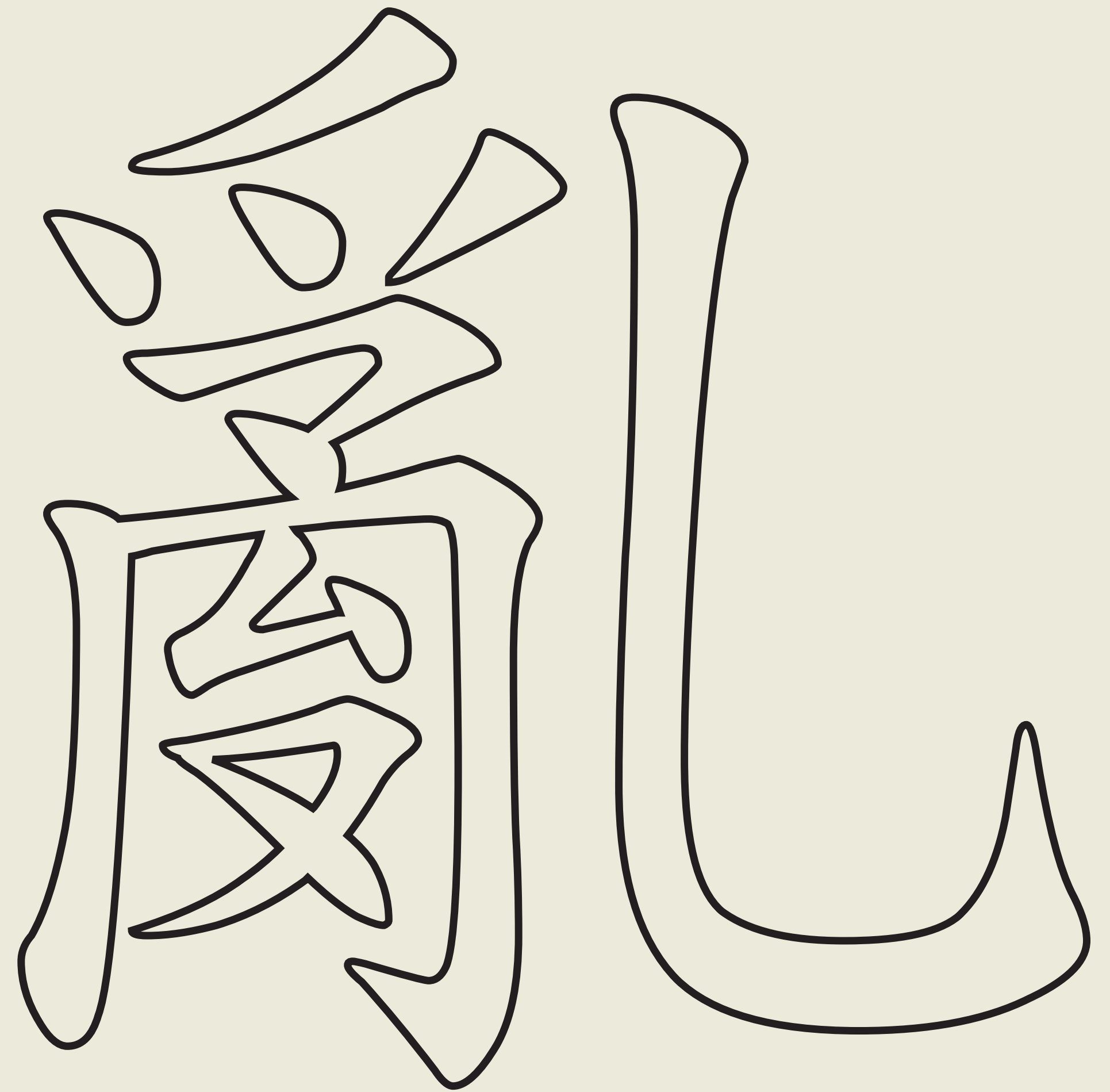
If we look at the construction of the character, the character 亂 consists of a complicated-looking character on the left that can be broken down to

爪 (claw), 幺 (representing silk), 又 (hand), 凵 (a partially enclosed looking symbol), and 乚 (a radical variant of 乙, meaning the second) on the right.

A large, bold calligraphic character in black ink on a white background. The character is '亂' (luan), which is composed of the radical '亂' (luan) on the left and the radical '乚' (er) on the right. The left part is highly stylized with multiple overlapping strokes, while the right part is a single, thick, curved stroke.

For many Americans, 2019 feels like the continuation of 2018 with a higher intensity: The US-China trade war in its second year and the political tension between the Trump White House and House Democrats continues.

The meanings of 亂 (luàn) are order, disorder, confusion, unrest, and upheaval.



亂 (luàn) is an interesting Chinese character that has two opposite meanings: Order and disorder.

Originally, the character meant orderly and able to be governed.

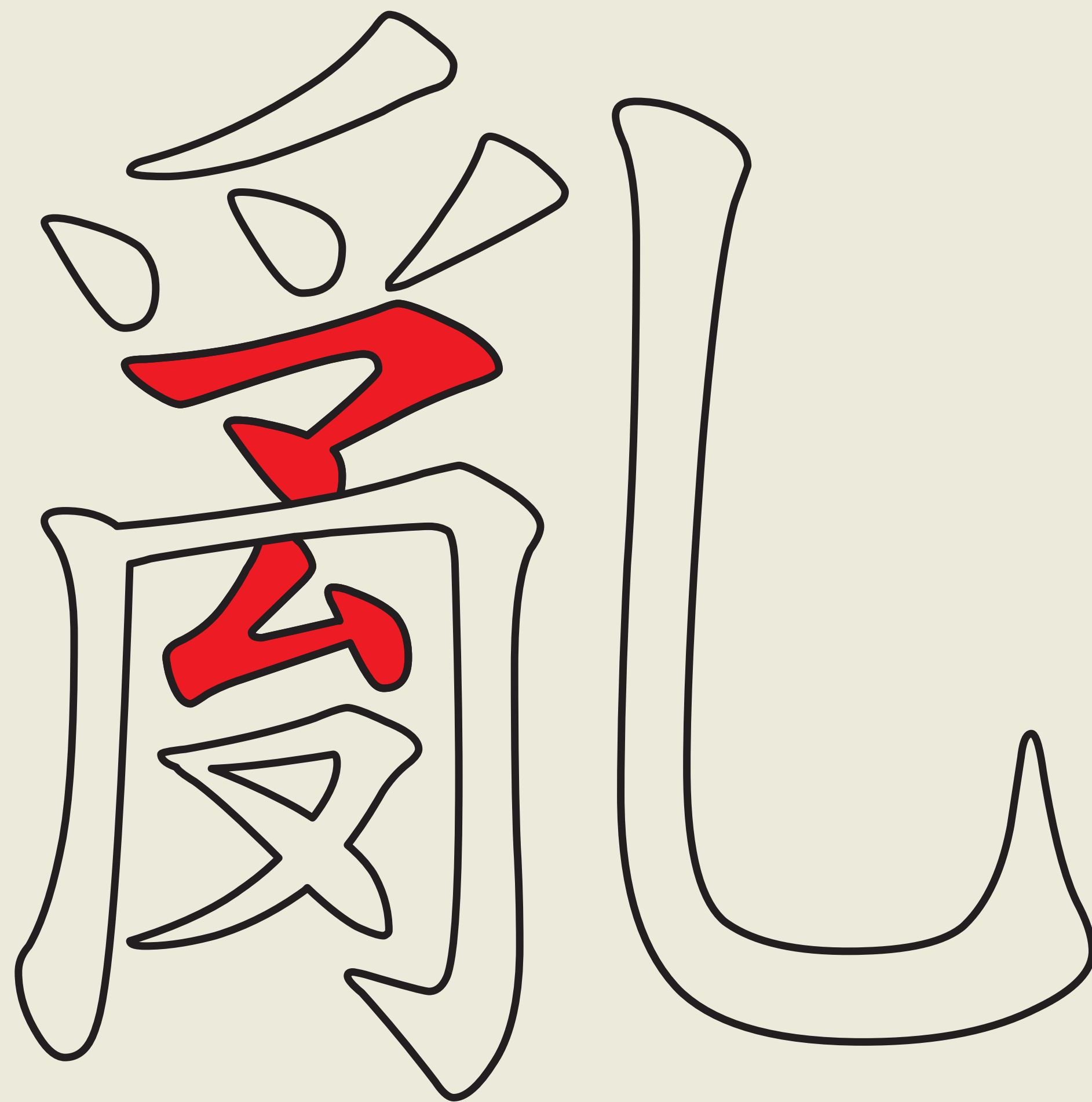
It is a pictograph of two hands (爪 and 又) at top and bottom...



... trying to arrange silk (represented by 幺 and in a way that the top part of the character is turned around), which is in the middle.

A red cursive calligraphic character representing the word 'silk'.

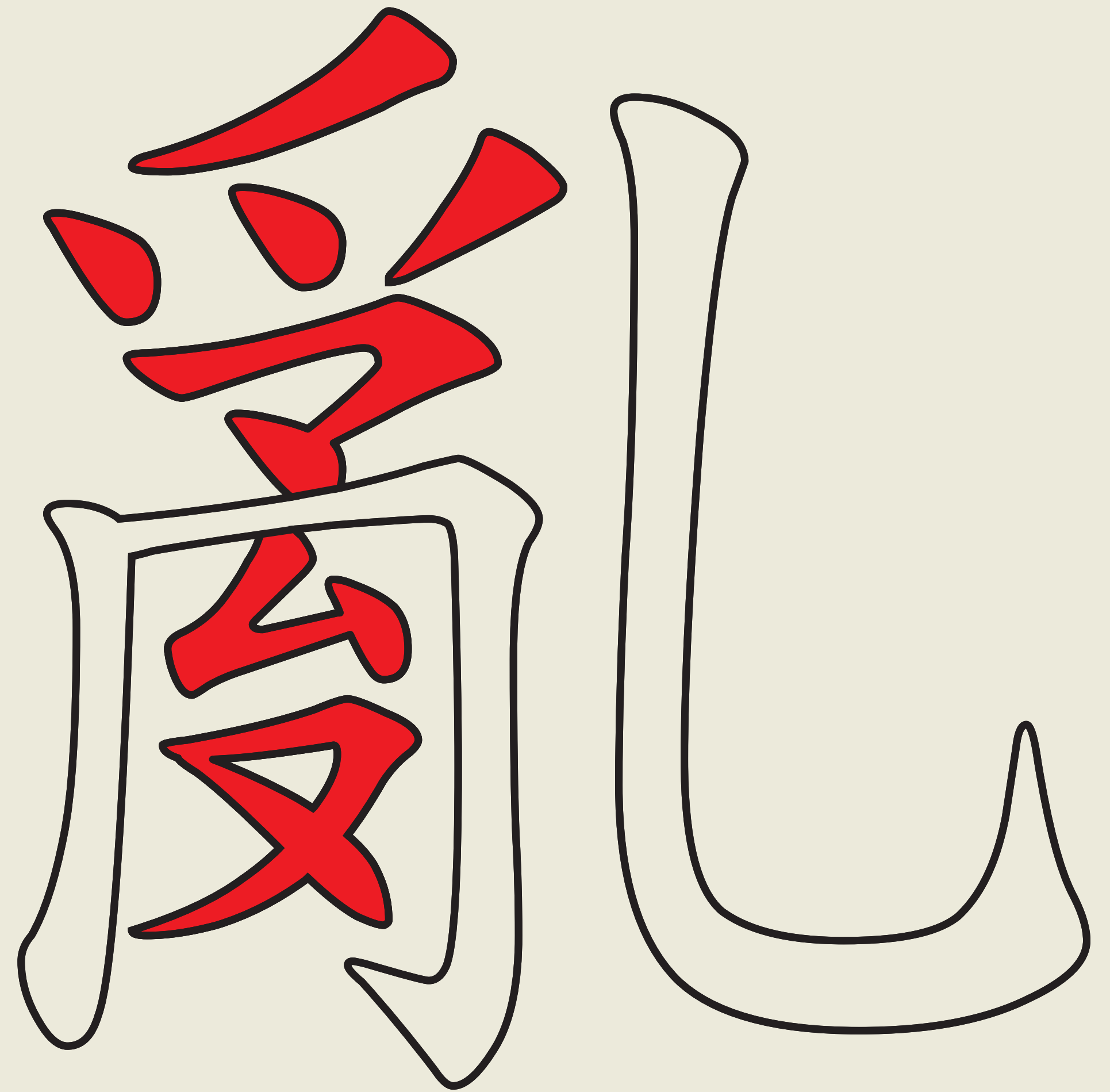
Silk

A red and grey cursive calligraphic character representing the word 'silk'. A curved arrow above the top part of the character indicates a rotation.A large stylized character composed of red and black outlines. The top part is red and the bottom part is black. An arrow points from the middle character to this one.

The 乚 character component on the right might also represent a silk thread. Over time, the character evolved to mean disorder instead of order. And that's the most common meaning people know today.



For our purposes, the two hands represent the US and China, two countries, arm-wrestling. The silk in the middle, with its obvious association with the Silk Road trade route, represents the trade between the two countries, which is what the arm-wrestling is trying to bring order to.



The partially enclosed looking character component 冂 going right through silk (纟) represents trade barriers such as tariffs.

And 乚 on the right, a radical variant of 乙, meaning the second, indicates the second year of this conflict.



The simplified version of 亂 is 乱.
It consists of 舌 (tongue) on the left
and the same 乚 radical on the right.
This represents the drama caused by
words that has resulted in an
impeachment inquiry into what
President Trump's words to Ukraine's
president were about.



Outside of the US, 2019 has been a year of unrest; we witnessed demonstrations and protests in Hong Kong going from orderly to disorderly and risking becoming even more chaotic.

There is a widespread folklore belief in China that says “every nine will be chaotic” (逢九必亂, féng jiǔ bì luàn): Mao established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The Dalai Lama fled to India during the Tibetan uprising in 1959. Tiananmen Square protests resulted in a deadly government crackdown on June, 4, 1989.

And now, Hong Kong protests in 2019.

In conclusion, 2019 has been a year of 亂 (luàn): confusion, unrest, disorder, and upheaval. It is Good Characters' hope that just as 亂 once meant order, cooperation (two hands 爪 and 又) will eventually be able to reverse the unrest.





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