

Idiom by Lon Yan

初生之犢

chu1 sheng1 zhi1 du2

The video of a young boy riding a gigantic python in ankle-high muddy water went viral on the internet. It was taken in Vietnam.

The snake was actually a family pet. The father explained that the reptile needed to come out “to extend its body and get some air” in the backyard after the flooding. He said the snake was “friendly” and has never attacked people.

Even so, had the incident happened in Western countries, it might have caused an uproar, with the parents, or snake owner, and more likely both, arrested for putting the life of a child in danger.

The body of the 20-foot snake was thick as its rider’s thigh, but the boy was not frightened at all. The smile on his face showed it was probably not the first time he

did snake-back riding.

The idiom that comes to mind is “初生之犢” (*chu1 sheng1 zhi1 du2*).

“初生” (*chu1 sheng1*) means “newborn,” “之” (*zhi1*) “this,” “that,” and “犢” (*zhi1 du2*) “a calf.” “初生之犢” (*chu1 sheng1 zhi1 du2*) is “a newborn calf.”

“初生之犢” (*chu1 sheng1 zhi1 du2*) is part of the saying “初生之犢不怕虎” (*chu1 sheng1 zhi1 du2 bu2 pa4 hu3*) – “a new-born calf is not afraid of tiger,” “a new-born calf has no fear of the tiger.” The idiom means “the fearlessness of youth.”

Mature people often overthink, and are intimidated into inaction by worst case scenarios. So sometimes you really need a bit of the “初生之犢” (*chu1 sheng1 zhi1 du2*) spirit to take on challenges.

Terms containing the character “初” (*chu1*) include:

初步 (*chu1 bu4*) – initial; preliminary

初期 (*chu1 qi1*) – the initial stage; early days

初賽 (*chu1 sai4*) – initial heats of a competition

初戀 (*chu1 lian4*) – first love