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 confections and sweets

奶 = 乳 (ru = milk): 乳牛 (ru niu = milk/dairy-cattle), 鮮奶 (xian nai = fresh-milk), 奶粉 (nai fen = milk-powder = powdered milk), 豆奶 (dou nai = soybean-milk). 乳酪 (ru lao = milk-curd) is made from 牛奶 (niu nai = cow-milk), 羊奶 (yang nai = goat-milk). Nomadic people drink 马奶茶 (ma nai cha = horse-milk-tea).

乳房 (ru fang = milk-room/compartment) = 奶子 (nai zi = milk-diminutive) = woman’s breasts/tits. 乳罩 (ru zhao = breast-cover) = bra. Mothers breastfeed babies with 人奶 (ren nai = human-milk). 乳娘 (ru niang = milk-mother) = wet-nurse.

“有奶便是娘” (you nai bian shi niang = has-milk~thus~is~mother) describes unprincipled persons who worship/obey anyone with money/power.

by Diana Yue