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 Tibet

密 means secret: 秘密 (mi mi) are secrets, 密謀 (mi mou = secret-plan) means conspiracy.

In Buddhism, 顯教 (xian jiao = open/plain-teaching) emphasizes attaining enlightenment through understanding doctrine, 密教 (mi jiao = secret-teaching), also called 密宗 (mi zong = secret-sect = Tantric Sect), emphasizes attaining enlightenment through esoteric methods, e.g. 咒語 (zhou yu = vow-words = secret incantations), 祈禱 (qi tao = plead-pray = prayers), 儀式 (yi shi = rites-forms = rites), 轉法輪 (zhuan fa lun = turn-Dharma-wheel).

In Tibet, generations of re-incarnated 達賴喇嘛 (da lai la ma = Dalai-Lama-transliterated) and 班禪喇嘛 (ban chan la ma = Panchen-Lama-transliterated) were chosen as 靈童 (ling tong = soul-boys) and groomed to lead the theocracy.

Pronunciation: mi (Putonghua, 4th tone), mat (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: tight, secret, hidden, Tantric

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