

# 心腹大患

*xin1 fu4 da4 huan4*

“Localist” group Hong Kong Indigenous leader Edward Leung Tin-kei (梁天琦) lost in the Legislative Council New Territories East district by-election. But he came in just behind the two candidates from the two leading political camps, and managed to secure 66,000 votes – or 15 percent – which was unexpectedly high.

Political watchers said this is significant. Leung grabbed a substantial number of votes from winner Alvin Yeung Ngok-kiu (楊岳橋) of the Civic Party. An academic called it very bad news “for moderate members of the pan-democratic camp.” Another commentator saw candidates like Leung as the pan-democrats’ “心腹大患” (*xin1 fu4 da4 huan4*).

“心” (*xin1*) “the heart,” “腹” (*fu4*) “abdomen,” “belly,” “大” (*da4*) “big,” “huge,” “major,” and “患” (*huan4*) “a disease,” “malady,” “affliction.” Literally, “心腹大患” (*xin1 fu4 da4 huan4*) “a serious disease of the heart and abdomen.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

As a term, “心腹” (*xin4 fu4*) means “trusted aides,” “confidant.” When your trusted aides become a disease to you, they are even more dangerous than those who are openly your enemy.

So the idiom means, figuratively, “dangerous enemy within,” “serious danger of betrayal or revolt from those closest,” “serious hidden trouble or danger,” “big threat from within.”

Another version of the idiom is “心腹之患” (*xin1 fu4 zhi1 huan4*). In this version, “大患” (*da4 huan4*) is changed to “患,” “disease.” But even without explicitly stating the seriousness of the disease, any disease that is growing inside you can’t be good.

**Terms containing the character “患” (*huan4*) include:**

患病 (*huan4 bing4*) – fall sick

災患 (*zai1 huan4*) – disaster

為患 (*wei2 huan4*) – to be a constant source of trouble

後患 (*hou4 huan4*) – future troubles