

趨炎附勢

qu1 yan2 fu4 shi4

“趨炎附勢” (qu1 yan2 fu4 shi4) refers to rather common but obnoxious behavior.

“趨”(qu1) is “to tend toward,” “炎”(yan2) “burning hot,” “附”(fu4) “to attach” and “勢”(shi4) is “power,” “strength,” “influence.” “趨炎附勢” (qu1 yan2 fu4 shi4), literally, is “to tend toward the burning hot and attach to power and influence.”

It means “to play up to those in power,” “to be a follower of the rich and powerful,” “to curry favor with influential people. People who “趨炎附勢” (qu1 yan2 fu4 shi4) are obsequious (巴結奉迎) and sycophantic (阿諛奉承).

A related idiom is “一沉百踩” (yi4 chen2 bai3 cai3) which describes how people treat those who are on the decline. “沉”(chen2) is “to sink” and “踩”(cai3) “to step on,” “to tread on.” “一沉百踩” (yi4 chen2 bai3 cai3) means the moment people see you fall, everyone comes and tread on you.

Idiom by Lon Yan

A commentator used “一沉百踩” (yi4 chen2 bai3 cai3) to describe how our competitors in the region regarded the state of our rule of law when our law and order was shaken by violent street protests.

A colloquial expression that encompasses the meanings of both “趨炎附勢” (qu1 yan2 fu4 shi4) and “一沉百踩” (yi4 chen2 bai3 cai3) is “跟紅頂白” (gen1 hong2 ding3 bai2), literally “go with the red and go against the white”, with “red” an analogy for “those in power” and “white” “those who are down and out.”

Terms containing the character “勢” (shi4) include:

勢力 (shi4 li4) – power; influence; a force

走勢 (zou3 shi4) – tendency; trend

得勢 (de2 shi4) – rising in power

失勢 (shi1 shi4) – lose power and influence