

Idiom by Lon Yan

人神共憤

ren2 shen2 gong4 fen4

A man burst into Wong Tai Sin Temple, brandishing a knife. Worshippers scurried for cover as the man started to slash up bunting and attacked a security guard who tried to subdue him.

Wreaking havoc in a place of worship is an act that should anger both worshippers and the deity being worshipped, and the idiom “人神共憤” (*ren2 shen2 gong4 fen4*) comes to mind. “人” (*ren2*) is people; a person, “神” (*shen2*) “a deity,” “a god,” “共” (*gong4*) “common,” “to share,” “together” and “憤” (*fen4*) “to be indignant,” “to be angry.”

Literally, “人神共憤” (*ren2 shen2 gong4 fen4*) is “men and gods both indignant,” “men and deities angry together.”

“人神共憤” (*ren2 shen2 gong4 fen4*) means “arousing great indignation among both men and gods,” “making men and gods both angry.” The idiom is used to describe

heinous acts that cause great suffering, destruction or injustice.

The idiom is reserved for evil deeds of a very serious nature. Even a robber who takes money from an elderly victim does not qualify, less still the act of back-stabbing perpetrated on you by a colleague.

It will be appropriate to use it when a dictator massacres dissenters, or terrorists blow up a plane with hundreds of passengers on board.

The man who ran amok in the Wong Tai Sin Temple was reported to be mentally unstable.

While his conduct was dangerous, it was not really one in the same league as “人神共憤” (*ren2 shen2 gong4 fen4*). The incident is used only as a literal and tongue-in-cheek example of an application of the idiom.

Terms containing the character “共” (*gong4*) include:

共識 (*gong4 shi2*) – a consensus

共鳴 (*gong4 ming2*) – resonance; sympathetic response

公共 (*gong1 gong4*) – public

公共巴士 (*gong1 gong4 ba1 shi4*) – public bus