

Idiom by Lon Yan

亂七八糟

luan4 qi1 ba1 zao1

Another regular meeting at the Legislative Council ended farcically before it even started.

It was aborted when wayward lawmakers Sixtus Leung Chung-hang and Yau Wai-ching defied a ban and entered the council chamber, escorted by a group of sympathetic colleagues who kept security staff at bay.

The state of affairs at the lawmaking body, as a *Headline Daily* columnist said, can only be described as “亂七八糟” (*luan4 qi1 ba1 zao1*).

“亂” (*luan4*) is “in confusion or disorder;” “七” (*qi1*) “seven;” “八” (*ba1*) “eight” and “糟” (*zao1*) “in a wretched state;” “in a mess.” The expression “亂糟糟” (*luan1 zao1 zao1*), formed by the characters “亂” (*luan4*) and “糟” (*zao1*), means “chaotic;” “confused;” “topsy-turvy.”

Literally, “亂七八糟” (*luan4 qi1 ba1 zao1*) is “chaos seven, eight a mess.” The idiom means “in great confusion;” “in utter disorder;” “everything in disorder;” “a hideous mess.”

The numbers seven and eight are probably randomly picked to form the idiom to denote multiple things are in chaos.

Interestingly, there is also an English expression that uses numbers to describe chaos. It is “at sixes and sevens,” which means “in a confused, badly organized or difficult situation.”

Yet another related Chinese idiom that uses numbers is “顛三倒四” (*dian1 san1 dao4 si4*), literally, “toss three and places four upside down,” meaning “incoherent;” “disorderly;” “confused.”

All of these expressions – be they three, four, seven or eight – can be applied to the state of affairs at Legco as well as the conduct and mentality of its honorable members.

Terms containing the character “亂” (*luan4*) include:

亂來 (*luan4 lai2*) – to act foolishly and recklessly

騷亂 (*sao1 luan4*) – disturbance; riot

搗亂 (*dao3 luan4*) – to make trouble

胡亂 (*hu2 luan4*) – carelessly