

Idiom by Lon Yan

既往不咎

ji4 wang3 bu2 jiu4

After months of investigation, Zimbabwe has finally decided not to prosecute the US dentist who sparked international fury after killing Cecil the Lion while hunting in a national park in the country in July.

Palmer had admitted to killing the rare black-maned lion but denied that he acted illegally or knew that the lion was a local icon.

The country found Palmer had permission to hunt and all the papers were in order, and allowed him to return to Zimbabwe as a tourist. The stance Zimbabwe has taken in this case is “既往不咎” (*ji4 wang3 bu2 jiu4*).

“既” (*ji4*) is “since,” “as,” “already,” “往” (*wang3*) “past,” “bygone,” “gone,” “不” (*bu2*) “no,” “not” and “咎” (*jiu4*) “fault,” “blame,” “punish.” Literally, “既往不咎” (*ji4 wang3 bu2 jiu4*) is “since it is in the past, there will be no punishment.”

The idiom means “to overlook somebody’s past mistakes,” “not censure someone for his past deeds,” “to forgive somebody’s past misdeeds.” It also means “to let bygones be bygones,” “to wipe the slate clean.”

“既往不咎” (*ji4 wang3 bu2 jiu4*) is the essence of an amnesty or a royal or presidential pardon.

But two lawmaker-elects who were insincere and insulting in their sworn-ins have found out the hard way that there are matters that will not be “既往不咎” (*ji4 wang3 bu2 jiu4*), so do a few other lawmakers whose right to retain their seats are being challenged in court.

But there is nothing you can do to help if people “自取其咎” (*zi4 qu3 qi2 jiu4*) – to bring trouble through one’s own actions.

Terms containing the character “往” (*wang3*) include:

往事 (*wang3 shi4*) – a past event

往日 (*wang3 ri4*) – former days; bygone days

前往 (*qian2 wang3*) – to go to

來往 (*lai2 wang3*) – dealings; contact; to socialize with someone