

Idiom by Lon Yan

後患無窮

hou4 huan4 wu2 qiong2

A man went to a court hearing concerning his friend. Apparently he wasn't very brilliant, didn't know exactly what was going on, and thought the judge has denied his friend bail.

He left but the more he thought about it, the angrier he became, so he returned to the courtroom and threw a sack of something at the judge.

It missed. The sack was later found to be full of buns, so it couldn't have caused serious injury.

But the act of attacking a judge was no laughing matter, so the man was, himself, duly arrested.

It transpired later that the judge had, in fact, not denied his friend bail.

A commentator observed that judges have been targets of attacks more frequently in recent years, and such challenges to the

judicial system must be dealt with resolutely and severely, or it would be “後患無窮” (*hou4 huan4 wu2 qiong2*).

“後” (*hou4*) is “behind,” “after,” “afterwards;” “患” (*huan4*) “trouble;” “misery;” “後患” (*hou4 huan4*) is “aftermath.” “無” (*wu2*) “without;” “nil” and “窮” (*qiong2*) “poor;” “exhaust;” “use up.” “無窮” (*wu2 qiong2*) means “infinite;” “endless;” “limitless;” “interminable (無休止的; 沒完沒了的).”

Literally, “後患無窮” (*hou4 huan4 wu2 qiong2*) is “aftermath no end.” The idiom means “to bring endless trouble;” “no end of trouble for the future;” “to be fraught with danger ever afterwards.”

The moral of the idiom is to nip the problem in the bud, and not to let it fester and grow.

Terms containing the character “窮” (*qiong2*) include:

窮人 (*qiong2 ren2*) – poor people

窮困 (*qiong2 kun4*) – in poverty and distress; destitution

貧窮 (*pin2 qiong2*) – poor, needy, impoverished

窮光蛋 (*qiong2 guang1 dan4*) – a poor wretch; a penniless vagrant