

Idiom by Lon Yan

生財有道

sheng1 cai2 you3 dao4

People at a Wuxi country (巫溪縣) village in Chongqing (重慶市) have elevated banquet-hosting into an art form, throwing parties for all kinds of reasons.

There were the “celebration banquet” when the child did well in exam, “consolation banquet” for the child who did not, “rehabilitation banquet” when a family member was released from prison, and pre-natal “fetus calming banquet” to, well, calm the fetus of course. They even hosted banquets when their pigs gave birth.

The purpose was to make money, as those invited are expected to come bearing gift in cash. Cash gift for the banquet hosts is called “人情” (*ren2 qing2*), literally “human feeling.” Not giving “人情” (*ren2 qing2*) means you have “no human feeling.”

Some may say the villagers are “生財有道”

(*sheng1 cai2 you3 dao4*).

“生” (*sheng1*) is “to give birth to,” “to produce,” “to grow,” “財” (*cai2*) “wealth,” “money” and “生財” (*sheng1 cai2*) is “to make money.” “有” (*you3*) “to have” and “道” (*dao4*) “a road,” “a method.” Literally, “生財有道” (*sheng1 cai2 you3 dao4*) is “there are ways to make money”. The idiom means “to have a knack for making money.”

The village government has since banned all these “no reason banquets” (無事酒), allowing only banquets for weddings, child births, major birthdays, and death in the family.

Actually, it was hardly surprising these villagers did what they did. In Cantonese, their county’s name “巫溪” (*mo kai*) sounds exactly the same as “無稽” – absurd!

Terms containing the character “財” (*cai2*) include:

財產 (*cai2 chan3*) – property; money; assets

財富 (*cai2 fu4*) – wealth; fortune; riches

財神 (*cai2 shen2*) – the God of wealth

恭喜發財 (*gong1 xi3 fa1 cai2*) – wishing you a prosperous New Year