

Idiom by Lon Yan

厚此薄彼

hou4 ci3 bo2 bi3

A Japanese street entertainer complained of police harassment when he was performing in the pedestrian zone in Mong Kok. It wasn't the first time the artiste – known as Mr Wally – had come to perform in Hong Kong, and he had encountered no trouble before.

But recently when he was singing on the street, a policeman came over and stopped him. He explained that he has a working holiday visa, but the policeman insisted only Hong Kong ID holders were entitled to perform on the street. What the policeman was alleged to have done was “厚此薄彼” (*hou4 ci3 bo2 bi3*).

“厚” (*hou4*) is “thick,” “kind,” “to show favor to,” “此” (*ci3*) “this,” “these,” “薄” (*bo2*) “thin,” “not generous,” “彼” (*bi3*) “that,” “those,” “the other.”

Literally, “厚此薄彼” (*hou4 ci3 bo2 bi3*) is “show favor to one, not generous to the other.”

It means “to favor one more than another,” “to treat with partiality,” “to be unfair,” “to be partial to one while neglecting the other,” “to favor one and discriminate against the other.”

Allowing locals to do something and disallowing non-locals to do the same thing when the latter has the right to do it is “厚此薄彼” (*hou4 ci3 bo2 bi3*) as it is favoring locals and discriminating against non-locals.

But according to the police, no “厚此薄彼” (*hou4 ci3 bo2 bi3*) has taken place. They were only cautioning Mr Wally, together with all other performers, to watch their noise level as they may face verbal warning or prosecution if any complaints were received.

Terms containing the character “厚” (*hou4*) include:

厚望 (*hou4 wang4*) – great expectations; to place high hopes on

厚利 (*hou4 li4*) – a handsome profit

厚道 (*hou4 dao4*) – kind and honest; generous

厚顏 (*hou4 yan2*) – thick-skinned; shameless; cheeky