

真假難辨

zhen1 jia3 nan2 bian4

UFO sightings were reported again in Hong Kong. This time, mysterious flashing dots were seen over Tsing Yi, while another report was of a white light streaking across the sky in Mong Kok. This is not the first time UFOs have been reported locally. In fact, such reports were made to the Hong Kong Observatory by people quite regularly.

RTHK had made a documentary on this subject. People interviewed talked about seeing UFOs back in the 1980s when they were children or teenagers. One saw a huge round dark object hovering over Wah Fu Estate; another saw what appeared to be an "iron" saucer emitting colorful lights over a building.

Both said they stopped talking about it when no one would believe them. A government scientist said most of these sightings could be explained by natural causes, but a few did defy easy explanations.

These reports were, no doubt, true, at least as far as the "unidentified" part is concerned, from the

Idiom by Lon Yan

perspective of the persons seeing them. But some may neither be "flying" nor "objects" as they could just be a play of lights or a reflection.

The vexing question is if some of the UFOs were really flying machines carrying alien life forms. When the truth of something is hard to tell, we can use the idiom "真假難辨" (*zhen1 jia3 nan2 bian4*).

"真" (*zhen1*) is "real," "true," "genuine," "假" (*jia3*) "false" "fake," "難" (*nan2*) is "difficult" and "辨" (*bian4*) "differentiate," "recognize." Literally, "真假難辨" (*zhen1 jia3 nan2 bian4*) is "real fake hard to tell".

It means hard to distinguish true from false, real from unreal, genuine from imitation.

Terms containing the character "真" (*zhen1*) include:

真實 (*zhen1 shi2*) – true; real; factual

真相 (*zhen1 xiang4*) – the real situation; the truth

真正 (*zhen1 zheng4*) – genuine; authentic

真心 (*zhen1 xin1*) - wholehearted; sincere