

Idiom by Lon Yan

矢口否認

shi3 kou3 fou3 ren4

A fast food restaurant in Quarry Bay processed meat using filthy water at a back alley next to piles of garbage.

Despite pictures showing the unhygienic food handling, the shop's staff “矢口否認” (*shi3 kou3 fou3 ren4*) when the media called, saying instead that they had passed health inspections.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department confirmed it had received complaints about the restaurant, and that it is investigating the latest alleged infraction.

“矢” (*shi3*) means “arrow,” “dart,” and also “to vow,” “to take an oath,” “to pledge.” “口” (*kou3*) is “mouth.” “矢口” (*shi3 kou4*), as a term, means “to swear,” “to vow.” “否認” (*fou3 ren4*) is “to deny.” Literally, “矢口否認” (*shi3 kou3*

fou3 ren4) is “vow to deny,” “to deny by oath.” It means to “deny stoutly.”

A slightly different version of the idiom is “矢口抵賴” (*shi3 kou3 di3 lai4*). “抵賴” (*di3 lai4*) means “to deny a fact,” “to deny a truth.”

When people say “I swear to God I didn't do it!” what they are doing is “矢口否認” (*shi3 kou3 fou3 ren4*). And if they are lying, it becomes “矢口抵賴” (*shi3 kou3 di3 lai4*).

“矢口否認” (*shi3 kou3 fou3 ren4*) is usually the first reaction of people when they are accused of wrongdoing. When an accused in a criminal trial denied guilt on the stand, it is a literal case of “矢口否認” (*shi3 kou3 fou3 ren4*) as he or she would be testifying under oath.

Terms containing the character “認” (*ren4*) include:

認可 (*ren4 ke3*) – to agree; to approve

認為 (*ren4 wei2*) – to believe; to be of a certain opinion

認識 (*ren4 shi*) – to know; to understand

認罪 (*ren4 zui4*) – to admit one's guilt; to plead guilty