

Idiom by Lon Yan

童叟無欺

tong2 sou3 wu2 qi1

There are a few slogans shops in the old days liked to write on plaques and display prominently to promote business.

Apart from “如假包換” (*ru2 jia3 bao1 huan4*), “replacement guaranteed if not genuine,” “童叟無欺” (*tong2 sou3 wu2 qi1*) was also quite common.

“童” (*tong2*) is “a child,” “children,” “叟” (*sou3*) “an elder,” “a senior,” “the old,” “無” (*wu2*) “no,” “not” and “欺” (*qi1*) “to deceive,” “to fool,” “to take unfair advantage of,” “to dupe.” Literally, “童叟無欺” (*tong2 sou3 wu2 qi1*) is “children and elderly not cheated,” “cheating neither elderly nor youngsters.”

Children and seniors are supposed to be easy to cheat. Promising not to cheat even if the customer is a child or an elderly person is, therefore, a pledge of honesty.

It means “we are honest even to children

and aged people,” “treating youngsters and old folk equally scrupulously,” “we trade fairly with the old and young alike,” “we don’t take advantage of children and old folks.”

But honest people don’t need to always tell you how honest they are. In fact, when people start saying “honestly,” “frankly,” “to be honest,” it is time to be cautious. So it is doubtful if customers would really feel that your shop is honest just because you say “童叟無欺” (*tong2 sou3 wu2 qi1*).

But these days, “童叟無欺” (*tong2 sou3 wu2 qi1*) seems to be the modus operandi of telephone scammers – they don’t target children, nor the elderly, but victims who are in their prime, and cheated millions or even tens of millions out of them.

Terms containing the character “欺” (*qi1*) include:

欺騙 (*qi1 pian4*) – to deceive; to swindle; to defraud

欺負 (*qi1 fu4*) – to bully

欺凌 (*qi1 ling2*) – to bully and humiliate; bullying

欺壓 (*qi1 ya1*) – to bully and oppress; to tyrannize