

Idiom by Lon Yan

移風易俗

yi2 feng1 yi4 su2

Few people like sharks, which is understandable. What is there to like about cold-blooded killing machines? Occasional news about swimmers getting killed by sharks and horrific movie images of men gotten gobbled whole by great whites didn't help.

But bad rep or not, we still need to protect sharks, as they are endangered species. The biggest threat come from foodies, especially the Chinese, Hongkongers in particular, who continue to enjoy shark's fin soup as the conservationists look on in dismay.

Short of an official ban, it's hard to stop local people from eating sharks' fin soup, which is considered a delicacy, hence expensive, so its absence from wedding or birthday banquets might lead guests to call the host cheap.

The dish is ingrained in the local food

culture, and *Headline Daily* observed “移風易俗” (yi2 feng1 yi4 su2) is needed if the situation is to be changed.

“移” (yi2) is “to move or shift,” “to remove,” and formally “to change,” “風” (feng1) is “the wind,” “style” and it refers to “風氣” (feng1 qi4), meaning “common practice,” “general mood,” “atmosphere.” “易” (yi4) “to change,” and “俗” (su2) “custom,” “convention.”

Literally, “移風易俗” (yi2 feng1 yi4 su2) is “change the common practice and change the custom.” It means “to change customs and habits,” “to transform social traditions.”

A related idiom is “時移俗易” (shi2 yi2 su2 yi4) – customs change with the times. Apparently, the local custom of eating shark's fin soup has not changed with the times, so something needs to be done to “移風易俗” (yi2 feng1 yi4 su2).

Terms containing the character “移” (yi2) include:

移動 (yi2 dong4) – to move; to shift; to change

移民 (yi2 min2) – an immigrant; to immigrate

移植 (yi2 zhi2) – to transplant

遷移 (qian1 yi2) – to move to a different address; to migrate