Printing Culture in Rural North China

by

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Date July 10/00
Abstract

This manuscript examines the cultural history of rural North China, as seen through the production, circulation, content and interpretation of graphic wood-block prints, known as nianhua. The spatial focus is on a fixed set of print producing villages on the North China plain. The temporal focus encompasses the late 1800s through the early 1960s. In examining how nianhua were produced and distributed in late 19th and early 20th century North China, I show that the village print industry was prescriptive in organization. This organization was a basic factor in delimiting form and iconography in print, since it imposed limits on the free appropriation of texts, and directed the way in which they were read. Having accounted for these factors, I consider how perceptions of the social, physical and ethical world were put into print, and how print in turn configured perceptions of the world. Since print is thus socially derived, print and its interpretation are considered in terms of responses to social change, and the capacity of print to effect change. The environment in which village print is structured is variously considered to be formed by the following: the physical space of the home; late-imperial narrative structures (and their residual perpetuation beyond the decline of the political regime); narrative structures produced through technological change and expanded translocal experience; and state-centred reform beginning in the Republican era, and reaching its conclusion under communism. I conclude that narratives which began as superscriptive and authoritative structures, were appropriated and re-structured by the specific conditions of the production, distribution, and display of print in the village.
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James A. Flath, writing in the C.K. Choi building at UBC, April 29, 2000
1) Print and 'Popular Culture'

1.1 Introduction: History and Everyday Life

During a summer research trip to Shandong Province I once found myself hiking down a country road in the shadow of the Yellow River dikes of Donge County, in search of a Song dynasty monastery that I had read about in a local gazetteer. As I neared the location I stopped several times to ask directions of the local people working in the area, but the resulting communication only demonstrated that my destination was not common knowledge. At one point I approached a middle age farmer standing by an ox at the roadside and showed him the description, complete with photo, in my book. One glance and the man shrugged in ignorance, explaining 'Wo meiyou wenhud' (I am not cultured), indicating that he couldn't read, and therefore could offer no assistance.

The prospect that so many people appeared to have so little awareness of local historical capital was disturbing for one who proposed to investigate the cultural history of rural China. And yet as the day wore on I was confronted with evidence to the contrary, as practically everyone I met urged me to visit another local site, 'Cao Zhi Tomb'. The significance of the reference failed to dawn on me until I finally realized that this was the burial place of the famous third son of Cao Cao, the villainous warlord of China's pre-eminent historical novel Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

When I finally did arrive at my original destination it became apparent that aside from a primary school classroom in the front hall, the monastery was a collection of empty shells, stripped of any religious significance, and perhaps rightfully forgotten by those for whom monastic retreat was a dying concept. The message was clear - the real historical narratives of
rural China are less concerned with crumbling edifices and other material reminders of history than they are with the romantic fables that skim over the imagined surface of history. A few localities, like Donge County, are fortunate enough to have actual physical remnants that serve to further reify the narratives of fabled times. But the stories are transcribed well beyond the boundaries of the physical, so that regardless of levels of literacy or exposure to historical artifacts there is scarcely a resident of China who is not acquainted with them. Zhuge Liang, Jiang Ziya, Cao Cao and Cao Zhi, Song Jiang and Wu Song venture daily into ordinary culture through *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Bandits of the Marsh, Enfeoffment of the Gods* and a host of other media and mediators. But beyond its primary function as the basis for cheap entertainment or pulp fiction, this body of narrative forms the structural background through which historical events are cognitively organized.

1.1.1 History and Narrative

Historical events, as Paul Cohen suggests in *History in Three Keys* (1997), are 'messy'. If isolated from the media which recreate them (were that possible) people and events would tend not to have auspicious origins, dramatic plots, or glorious endings. Like the 1911 Xinhai Revolution thrust awkwardly into its place in history, or like Lu Xun's anti-hero Ah Q stumbling haplessly through its events, neither are the stuff of legend. But through narrative both revolution and anti-hero are endowed with the plot that makes sense of the experience. The revolution and its leaders are glorified by the leading script writers of the day, Ah Q pathetically sings heroic *xiqu*¹ to himself on the way to his own execution. Either way, when the chapters are closed it is

¹ As Elizabeth Wichman argues, 'opera' is insufficient to describe Chinese classical performing art, and the Chinese term *xiqu* should be used in the same context as the Japanese term *kabuki* is used for theatrical performances of that tradition. Wichman's point was made in a lecture at the Institute of Asian Research,
not the confusion of the event that lingers on, but its narrative reconciliation as a mature and singular moment.

Husserl suggested that such occurrences could be understood as comets trailing tails of the just past and pushing ahead of them envelopes of expectation for the future, or as a melody in which the hearer has consciousness of the present note, and retentional consciousness of that just past. These metaphors are intuitive, but still flawed in that they describe the experience of time as linear, moving in a clear direction with measured progress. Husserl's description is also problematic in that it does not allow for different temporal modes, nor consideration of how time and history are experienced as a community.

A better analogy is to visualize the event as a stone thrown into a pond, causing ripples to extend not only into the fore and background, but in all directions across the water's surface. If the moment when the stone breaks the water can represent the event, then the aftermath can be equated to narrative potentialities arising from that event. In this circumstance the observer does not perceive a direct line connecting their standing point with the 'event' at the epicentre, and the linear background which forms its past. The singular 'narrative' does not stand out against the field of vision, rather the 'event' is diffused outward, extended over time, and in most cases dissipated and forgotten.

Occasionally the event is not entirely lost in space or time but becomes frozen into accepted accounts. Some accounts may enter into the vernacular, and are retold in social circles such as the home, the market-place, or the tea-house where they gain recognition as 'stories,' 'superstitions,' and 'customs'. At the same time, higher organizing bodies such as the state,

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religious organizations, or academic institutes imbue events with more specific, linear, and cosmopolitan narrative values that may be accepted as 'history', 'religion', or 'rites'. Each telling of the narrative plays the dual role of reinforcing certain versions, and eliminating or restricting counter-narratives, thereby moving the narrative toward a cohesive account. Yet not even the most efficient program of censorship, proscription and promotion (a skill in which the Chinese state excels) is capable of narrowing the field to a single perspective or account. Dominant narratives associated with event and experience do emerge, but they are subject to fluctuation and variation, and seen in relation to the wider field that prefaces and informs reading and interpretation.

In concise terms, this manuscript is about how people in North-China visualized culture by rendering it into the block-print representations known as 'New Year Pictures' (hereafter nianhua). It is a study of history, but it is less interested in historical events and figures than it is in the 'historicity' of events, places, and figures, and the mythologizing process that recreates them as narratives, meaningful places and heroes. As such, this study reverses the usual method of filtering out bias, sensationalism and other aesthetic adornments so as to arrive at an accurate historical account. Instead the bias, sensationalism and aesthetics are considered central components of the account that complement the historical circumstances in which they arise. Without them the event would remain as little more than a disjointed 'splash in the pond,' or the proverbial 'tree falling in the forest.' Accordingly, narratives are not divorced from reality, but as

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3 I subscribe to the convention established in this century of referring to these prints as nianhua. Before the beginning of the twentieth century the term was seldom used. Li Guangting's Xiangyan Jiei of 1850 employs the term nianhua, as does a Hebei provincial trade report of 1913. But even by the 1930s prominent writers like Lu Xun continued to refer to the prints as huazhi. Nianhua, as a term, was not in common usage before the 1940s when the material became the subject for the nianhua reform movement. Other terms, depending on type, included 'paper horse' zhi ma for votive prints, and 'welcoming happiness pictures' huanle tu for decorative prints.
Carr argues, they are "extensions and configurations of its primary features." In other words, history is not linear or cyclical, but it is subject to organizing principles which tend to impose such interpretations on the past.

1.2 Methodology

When *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* was published in 1985 it set the standard for studies in the field, and over a decade later it still stands as the definitive work on Chinese 'popular culture'. In her introductory essay Evelyn Rawski asks cultural historians to consider themes that cut across different forms of media, and the relation of these themes to life, role models, and deviance. Known by Clifford Geertz as 'structures of signification', these themes contain multiple levels of significance and many levels of understanding. In the same volume, David Johnson argues from a Gramscian perspective that culture is necessarily governed by the structure of dominance that allows 'official culture' to impose its values as what Northrop Frye refers to as 'core beliefs' to which people willingly defer. And while Johnson, Rawski and other contributors to this volume have differing approaches, most agree that investigating 'consciousness' is the goal in reconstructing cultural history.

In recent years theoretical constructs of this nature have come under criticism. Roger Chartier has been one of the most vocal critics of this methodology, arguing that it is not 'consciousness', but "classifications, divisions and groupings ...[which] serve as the basis for our apprehension of the social world as fundamental categories of the perception and evaluation of

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4 David Carr *Time, Narrative and History* 1986, p. 16.
5 David Johnson et al., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* 1985, p. 401.
According to Chartier, it is necessary to avoid attaching extraneous meaning to the cultural text, and instead to consider texts in terms of the place (or milieu) in which statements were made and the conditions that made them possible, the schemata that lent them order and the principles of regularity that governed them, and the specific forms dictating the separation of 'truth' from 'fiction'.

This does not disqualify Johnson's 'culture as communication,' but does demand a more rigorous appraisal of culture as "a social history of the various interpretations, brought back to their fundamental determinants (which are social, institutional and cultural), and lodged in the specific practices that produce them."

Print (graphic and written) plays an integral role in human relations, and must be examined in terms of when, where, and how the printed items were produced, and displayed, and how these factors in turn formed and confined the interpretative space in which they could be read. Given the diversity of humans and human relations, any particular piece of print must be considered equally diverse, since its interpretation has the potential for change with each individual reader. Consequently, the reading of print must be considered as a function of the reader's position in that web of human relations. Realistically, we will never be able to entirely account for the diversity of any particular piece of print.

But while it is true that print is individually read, it is also true that print is socially produced, and that the circumstances of reading restrict the range of possible interpretation for a reader in a certain time, and in a certain place. Only by taking these configurations under consideration is it possible to interpret and reconstruct the significance of something apparently

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7 Roger Chartier *The Culture of Print* 1989, p. 10.
8 Ibid.
so simple, and in fact so complex as a colourful piece of print innocuously posted in a North China village household.\footnote{Chartier's comments about print in China and Korea being "reserved... for the administrative use of the ruler," (Chartier [ed] The Culture of Print 1988, p. 1) may accurately reflect the principles of the Chinese and Korean rulers, and the widespread censorship that occurred especially during the Kangxi and Qianlong eras (1662-1722), (1736-1795). However, as the abundance of printed material presented in this manuscript demonstrates, these principles only partially curtailed the spread of print, leaving considerable latitude for exploration and development. Under these circumstances, with some modification, Chartier's model is as applicable for China as it is for the West.}

1.3 Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

The purpose of this project is to use nianhua to investigate how people configured their social and cultural world through printed pictures, and how political and cultural authorities endeavoured to provide or impose structure on those same people, through that same medium. In researching the problem the following questions are addressed:

A) How do research sites stand in geographic and economic relation to each other, and how is that relationship reflected in artistic style, and variation in theme and style from place to place?

B) What were the specific conditions of the production and use of nianhua, and what themes did these conditions produce?

C) What cultural codes were used in the production of cultural texts?

Nianhua are an ideal resource for this type of cultural and social history since they exist in large numbers, can be identified with local production sites, were widespread throughout China, and contain complex texts of both graphic and literary nature. Supporting this primary material is the larger body of cultural and social material that circulated in village China. These include physical structures, such as home and market; oral traditions like local xiqu, and written resources like almanacs and moralistic/educational primers that gave context to graphic texts. A
third body of supporting text is the twentieth century academic and political discourse over the structure of minjian (folk) culture (including, but not limited to nianhua), was articulated in urban and political centres, and played a significant role in the formulation of cultural codes that were reproduced locally.

1.3.1 Temporal Focus

Since many of the prints discussed in this manuscript are not dated, there is a basic problem in confirming that certain types of printed picture represent a specific time frame. This problem is resolved by limiting the discussion to the relatively recent past, defined roughly as the century between the beginning of the Guangxu era of the late-Qing (1875), and the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China (PRC) (mid-1960s). This periodization resolves most problems in determining the temporality of the material, first because most print genres extant today were also extant in the very late Qing, and second, because the provenance and dates for those prints that still survive, but were produced after that time is generally obvious owing to the content and style.\(^\text{11}\) While a few examples of ancient printing blocks do in fact exist (some reportedly dating back to the Ming dynasty) most blocks do not last longer than twenty years, or less depending on use.\(^\text{12}\) Thereafter any printing blocks that were too worn for use, or which represented obsolete or unpopular themes, would have served out their final purpose as firewood or paving blocks. Finally, as proof that all of the prints under discussion in this manuscript were in circulation during the relevant time frame, one need only refer to the large

\(^{11}\) Researchers like Wang Shucun, however, have had considerable success in assigning approximate, and often definite primary production dates to nianhua. Providing that we accept Wang's methodology, there is still considerable potential to look at these items as representative of some very specific time frames even in the early-mid Qing.

\(^{12}\) Cong Cong estimated that under normal use a printing block lasted only three to five years. Liyan Huakan 177, 1942, p. 16.
volumes of prints accumulated by Alexeev, Laufer, Goodrich, Dubosc, Shi Shizhen, Wang Shangyi and others in the years between 1900 and 1940.\footnote{See bibliography 'major collections', and J.P. Dubosc's catalogue of prints, 'Exposition Catalogue' 1942.}

This temporal choice is also advantageous in that it covers a period in which the cultural manifestations of late traditional China come into conflict with some of the most dynamic events in modern Chinese history, including several international wars, limited industrialization, imperialism, the Boxer Uprising, two revolutions divided by warlordism and civil war, and finally the political and social upheaval associated with establishment of the PRC. It is the confluence of these events that form the subject for the latter part of this manuscript.

1.3.2 Spatial Focus

Geographically, the region of study is limited to North China, concentrating on the provinces of Shandong, Hebei, and Henan, and maintaining a secondary interest in Shanxi, Shaanxi, the provinces of the North-East and Shanghai. More than an arbitrary geographic division, this region can be defined as a distinct trade region for North China \textit{nianhua} producers, and the exchange within this region produces regional similarities in style and content of North China \textit{nianhua}. This distinction becomes especially apparent when comparing North China prints to prints from Suzhou, Guangdong, or Sichuan, which each had styles all their own.

This is still a vast geographic area containing a massive population, but within its boundaries the print market was dominated by a small number of village based printing centres. In each case one or two towns or villages served as the centre for a cottage industry dispersed over its immediate region. The \textit{nianhua} printing centres include Yangliuqing and Chaomidian, Tianjin prefecture (formerly part of Hebei province [Zhili prior to 1928]); Zhuxianzhen, Kaifeng prefecture, Henan; Yangjiabu, Wei county, east-central Shandong; Zongjiazhuang, Pingdu
Map II
Jiaodong Penninsula (Shandong)
1920

Gulf of Bohai
Yantai
Shouguang
Changle
Hanting
Weixian
Yangjiabu
Pingdu
Yongjiazhuang
Jiangzhuangzhen
Gaomi
Taitou
Qingdao
Roadway
Railway
county, east Shandong; Jiangzhuangzhen, Gaomi county, east Shandong; and Wuqiang county, south-central Hebei.\textsuperscript{14} Anecdotal information is provided for other printing centres that either fall outside of the defined region, or are relatively minor in level of production. The second part of this manuscript includes the development of commercial and political forces that shifted part of the \textit{nianhua} production away from its original production sites, to Shanghai and Yan'an. However, the primary interest is in the influence that these developments had on village print. As such this manuscript is predominantly concerned with rural industry and cultural life.

In regard to the micro-environment in which \textit{nianhua} pictures were displayed, the study brings the print back to its most fundamental determinants. In the first part of this manuscript this environment is the North China home. Early ethnographers such as Nagao Ryuzo and Henri Dore demonstrate that prints were not distributed at random throughout the home, but that the display of prints within domestic architecture depended on a formula set by ritual and convention. The subject is further delimited by placing the home at the centre of a web of human relations. It may then be considered how printed texts, social experience, and natural phenomena informed and conditioned the interpretation of pictures in the home. The intention is not to reduce society to a support system for the home, but to bring social and cultural discourse into manageable proportions by discussing them in terms of a concrete environment.

The placement of the home at the centre of North China social life contrasts with William Skinner's classic 'Marketing and Social Structure', which analyses Chinese village life on the basis of its market activities.\textsuperscript{15} The evidence presented here does not disprove Skinner's

\textsuperscript{14} The administrative centre of Wuqiang was moved to the present day site of Xiaofan in modern times. The original Wuqiang is now called Nanguan.

marketing thesis, but it does decentre the market as one of many possible nodes in the so-called web of human relations. That the home appears at the centre of that web is related to the nature of this form of print which, although it passed through the market and absorbed elements of market relations, was destined for the home. And so while the market is not considered to be inconsequential, the home and domestic relations are the most important factors in the final interpretation of festive pictures.

In the latter part of the manuscript, the emphasis shifts from the home as the centre for interpretation of pictures, to the commercial and political theatres. This is because during the eras of late Republican China (ROC) and the PRC, control over the medium shifted first to urban-commercial interests, and then to the academic and political forum. The target of these commercial and political agencies was still primarily the home, but it can be shown that the domestic and ritual interpretation of print began to be supplemented by distinct commercial and political interpretations. This shift suggests the transition from 'popular culture' to 'mass culture' which has involved much theoretical debate in the field of cultural history. The present manuscript, however, treats such constructs as external to the context in which the original prints were formed and interpreted, and instead focuses on the social, institutional and cultural determinants that configure the text.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Primary Material

Any historian relying on written texts to explain village cultural life and art will encounter a fundamental problem with sources. Contextual material on religious narratives found in
nianhua is available because of the organizational support of religious societies. Historical narratives too are based on printed volumes, and although nianhua narratives frequently depart from both historical and published representation, these written sources do at least provide a point of reference from which to trace the development of graphic narrative. But for most of the Chinese educated class prior to the 1920s, village cultural life, festive pictures, and other local beliefs and arts were simply beneath consideration. As a result there are few written accounts of the production, interpretation, and use of nianhua. It is instructive that Li Guangting's Xiangyan Jieyi (Country Sayings to Smile At, ca 1850) is among no more than a dozen works produced over the entire span of imperial China that make mention of village cultural life beyond listing fengsu (customs) in county gazetteers. Among these there is no known work which devotes more than a single paragraph to nianhua - Xiangyan Jieyi containing one of the more comprehensive accounts with an eighty word introduction to nianhua and a further 140 words on Door Gods. In several of these notations, such as Shenzhou Fengtu Ji (Shenzhou Local Conditions and Customs, 1900), there is mention that prints were especially popular among 'women and children', further suggesting that they were too coarse for deep consideration by anyone educated enough to write about them.

The lack of resources raises difficulties for the researcher who must proceed into the subject with little guidance from literary sources until the early twentieth century. In consideration of this material deficiency, the present volume adopts a methodology which treats nianhua as print in its own right which was formed by, and had formative influence over the social world in which it circulated. As in any form of printed document, nianhua may be read as a text, so long as it is interpreted within context. At the same time literary references are accepted

16 See Li Guangting Xiangyan Jieyi 1982b, pp.65, 66.
for what they are: useful, but peripheral observations that can help to direct reading and establish facts.

1.4.2 Secondary Material

'Folk-culture' as an academic study is a relatively young discipline in China. On a number of occasions in Chinese history, literati such as Feng Menglong (1574-1646) and Pu Songling (1640-1715) have delved into 'folk songs' and 'fox-fairy tales' as inspiration for their writing. Official surveys of local customs have also been part of Chinese government administration virtually since the dawn of bureaucracy. But the concept of 'folk', or minjian culture, did not appear in China until the Republican era when folklore research groups were established in Beijing, Guangzhou, and Hangzhou, each producing journals which became the main venue for writing on the burgeoning subjects of folk-songs, regional customs, and folk-stories.\(^\text{17}\)

But while the 1920s and 1930s generated an unprecedented interest in folk-literature and folk-songs, there are few scholarly articles on folk-art before the 1930s, when folklorists tentatively began to consider the form in short articles found in the journals Yifeng (Art Scene) and Hebei Yuekan (Hebei Monthly). Still, as Zhong Jingwen stated in 1933, by that time there was still no serious discussion of folk-art in China.\(^\text{18}\) Lu Xun briefly considered nianhua in relation to the Woodcut Movement which he promoted in the 1930s, but there was little interaction between folklorists and artists until 1937, when Zhong Jingwen and art-instructor Shi Shizhen organized the first 'folk pictures' exhibit in Hangzhou.

\(^{17}\) Since perspectives on folk art in Republican and early Maoist China will be dealt with in depth later in this manuscript, this review will only introduce the subject.

\(^{18}\) See Zhong Jingwen in Yifeng 1(9) 1933, p. 9.
The Japanese occupation and beginning of the War of Resistance in 1937 brought an end to further civilian scholarly development of the pictorial form, but also provided the incentive to develop *nianhua* as resistance art. Since that time the interpretation of peasant art forms like *nianhua* have been closely connected with the ebb and flow of 'peasant' cultural politics.

Following Mao's 1942 directives on using the arts and literature of the 'people' for political work, high-level artists and cultural cadres, including Hu Yichuan, Jiang Feng, Li Qun, and Wang Zhaowen, began to submit articles concerning the stylistic and ideological orientation of *nianhua* to *Jiefang Ribao* (Liberation Daily) and other border-region newspapers. In 1950 national arts journals began to print numerous articles concerning the history and traditions of *nianhua* - accompanied by many other articles discussing ideological implications and potential for development. *Renmin Meishu* (People's Art) devoted a full volume to *nianhua* in 1950, and interest in the pictures continued to grow in the early 1950s, peaking in 1955-56 when *Meishu* (Art) carried no less than fifteen articles on *nianhua*.

Art-historian A Ying produced the first serious study of *nianhua* in *Zhongguo Nianhua Fazhan Shilue* ('A Brief History of Chinese Nianhua') in 1954. In this work, A Ying refers to *nianhua* in connection with the various classical texts from the Han and Song dynasties that contain *nianhua* references, through which he reconstructs the appearance of *nianhua* in the various dynasties. This set the standard for many of the 'histories of *nianhua*' which reconstruct development via reference to classical art and literature, thereby framing *nianhua* within 'culture' rather than 'custom'.

A second means of analysis used by A Ying is to invoke the names and styles of classical painters who may have served as models for *nianhua*. In this sense, A Ying set the stage for

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19 See Bonnie McDougall *Mao Zedong's 'Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art',* 1980.
Wang Shucun, the most widely published author in the field, in defining *nianhua* as within the classical tradition, and using classical art distinctions such as whether or not there were northern and southern schools of *nianhua*. By the late 1950s cultural policy had hardened considerably, and what had once been the culture of the 'masses' was set to be eradicated as a repository of 'feudalism', even while being reconfigured as state sanctioned 'peasant painting'. The effect of this policy is especially evident in the decade of the Cultural Revolution when, as with most subjects, there is very little literature on the subject of folk-arts.

Following this hiatus *nianhua* have been rehabilitated, with fully fledged government funded research institutes appearing in many of the original printing centres. Having risked his personal safety to preserve his *nianhua* collection during the Cultural Revolution, Wang Shucun has re-emerged as the principal authority on the subject, followed by Bo Songnian, whose *Zhongguo Nianhua Shi (History of Chinese Nianhua)* is the most comprehensive study of the development of the industry. Younger scholars, influenced by Western structuralism, and by the nativist *xungen* ('root-searching') movement in Chinese literature, have often turned to *nianhua* as a source of 'national essence' and 'tradition'. Under these rubrics the genre is variously seen as part of a larger 'system' of folk-imagery, as argued by Wang Haixia,\(^20\) as a representation of the 'primitive', as argued by Lu Pintian,\(^21\) or as an essentialist representation of the true 'descendants of the Yellow Emperor' seen in Liang Yuxiang.\(^22\)

But if Chinese studies of *nianhua* must be read in reference to shifting political and social interpretations of the peasant, many can also be read as the product of a research environment which in certain periods was relatively open. In the early 1950s, and from the mid-1970s onward,

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\(^{21}\) Lu Pintian *Meishi Shilun* 3, 1993, pp. 54-64, *Meishi Shilun* 4, 1993, pp. 78-81.

\(^{22}\) Liang Yuxiang *Meishi Shilun* 1, 1987, pp. 27-33.
the academic climate has allowed Chinese researchers to collect relevant data, without which this study would have been impossible. Since interpretative bias is generally transparent, much of this material can be accepted both as valuable for its research, and as a barometer of changing attitudes toward the 'folk-arts' in modern China.

1.4.3 Western Studies of Chinese Popular Culture

Foreign interest in nianhua did not begin until the late 19th century when Russian enthusiasts like G.N Potanin and V.I. Komarov began to bring small collections back to Europe from China.\textsuperscript{23} Another substantial collection was acquired by Berthold Laufer for the American Museum of Natural History between 1901-04. But as these collectors were not specialists in the subject, the collections were not accompanied by useful data or interpretation. The first real survey of Chinese nianhua was not undertaken until 1907, when the Russian sinologist Basil Alexeev, and his traveling companion and academic supervisor Edouard Chavannes, visited several North China nianhua production centres, including Yangliuqing and Yangjiabu.\textsuperscript{24} Alexeev's observations on religious prints were first published in Russian in 1910, followed in 1928 by a short treatise - \textit{The Chinese Gods of Wealth}. The balance of Alexeev's writings, however, were not published until 1966 as \textit{Kitajskaja Narodnaja Kartina (Chinese Popular Prints)}.

The dearth of material in both Chinese and Western languages continued until 1927 when Nachbauer and Wang produced an album of prints from Beijing and Tianjin. In 1942 art historian

\textsuperscript{23} G.N. Potanin's collection of 150 prints, obtained in 1883-84, is held at the Museum of Art in Irkutsk. V.L. Komarov's collection of 300 prints from 1896-97 are in St.Petersburg's Hermitage Museum.

\textsuperscript{24} The bulk of Alexeev's work was not published until after his death in the 1960s, although one smaller discussion of religious prints was printed in Russian in 1910, and his lecture \textit{The Chinese Gods of Wealth} was published in London in 1927.
J.P. Dubosc published a detailed catalogue of Door Gods and other ritual prints from North China. In 1940, Clarence Day, building largely on research on religious prints collected in Zhejiang and Jiangsu in the late 1920s, published *Chinese Peasant Cults*.\(^{25}\) Day's interpretation itself was based largely on secondary sources, especially Dore, who between 1911 and 1938 had made a large collection of religious prints for his sixteen volume *Recherches sur les Superstitions en Chine* (1911-39).

Like their Western counterparts, Japanese researchers began to show an interest in Chinese print in the 1930s, compiling several albums of *nianhua* - primarily from Yangliuqing, but possibly collected in Manchurian distribution centres. Although these volumes contain little interpretation beyond basic description, the Japanese colonial project is evident in titles like *Man Shi Zuan Seiku Taisei* ('Manchu Decoration', 1936) by Ihara Shizuka. The 'Manchu-Japanese Cultural Committee' contributed at least two titles: *Manzhou zhi Minyi* ('Folk-art of Manchuria' 1932) and *Manzhou:Beizhi Minyi Tuxuan* ('Manchuria: Collected Folk-pictures from the Northern Colonies', 1932). The Japanese Mantetsu Co., although it was sponsored by the Japanese military, also supported sociological and cultural surveys in North China in which *nianhua* figure prominently. One of these, Nagao Ryuzo's *Shina Minzokushi* ('Chinese Customs', 1940-2) provides important data for the present study.

There have also been a number of albums and technical discussions published in English, French, and German, which by their nature do little to advance the academic field.\(^{26}\) John Lust's *Chinese Popular Prints* (1996) is overly dependent on the work of Wang Shucun, but still serve's

\(^{25}\) Clarence Day *Chinese Peasant Cults* 1940.

as a useful research guide. The only work in recent years that has addressed theoretical issues in *nianhua* is MacIntyre's Ph.D. dissertation *Chinese New Year Pictures: the Process of Modernization* (1997). MacIntyre introduces useful data from the Shaanxi printing centre of Fengxiang, but as MacIntyre's theoretical orientation is toward establishing a post-modernist understanding of a visual language independent of historical context, it is difficult to include in contemporary historiography.

Having noted these contributions, it can be said that there is no sustained discourse on *nianhua* in the West. Thus, in order to situate this work within contemporary literature, it is necessary to consider how the broader field of Chinese 'popular culture' has been defined. To begin with, I find this particular rubric to be problematic. 'Culture' is one of the most complicated words in the English language, and it becomes no more lucid when appended to the term 'popular'. Yet there has been a remarkable willingness to accept 'popular culture' as a valid descriptive term for diverse textual phenomenon which usually share only in the virtue of having long avoided scrutiny in academic writing. But much as *minjian* is entrenched as a major point of reference in Chinese writing, so does the term 'popular culture' define the sub-discipline with which this study is most closely related. So while I wish to problematize the term, 'popular culture' studies must serve as the body of work for the comparison of methodological approaches.

There is a wide body of material which roughly covers the field of what could be described as 'popular practice', but only in the last two decades have these studies been organized under the rubric of 'popular culture'. The seminal contributions to this field are the 1985 conference volume *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, edited by Johnson, Nathan, Rawski, and its 1988 sequel, *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* edited by Rawski
and Watson. These were the first to assemble scholarly opinion on local cults, local xiqu, ritual, and various instructional, moralistic, religious and other vernacular texts into a study of 'popular culture'. In many respects these are still the most important works in the field, and so deserve the most thorough scrutiny since they continue to define the field. In keeping with the period in which *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* and *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* were produced, many of the contributors subscribe to *Annales* methodologies of investigating how values, ideas, assumptions and points of reference are shared and modified across social, economic, and geographic distances - otherwise known as *mentalités*. Other contributions to the study of popular culture in China include Perry Link's *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, and the edited volume *Unofficial China* by Link et al.

Although there is a tendency to classify all of the above as contributions to the all-inclusive Popular Culture, the field can be sub-divided into three areas more strictly defined as popular culture, mass culture, and modes of reading:

I) Popular Culture

As a specific type of cultural production, popular culture (not to be confused with the all-inclusive misnomer 'Popular Culture') may be defined as culture made and consumed by the same people. Studies bearing this focus often reflect cultural populism, which insists on the independent expressive potential of the less articulate (unpublished) sectors of the society.

In her discussion of Cantonese 'opera' Barbara Ward resolves contradictions in form and style through a purely literary analysis, but without consideration that differentiation and contradiction can, and do co-exist without resolution. Furthermore, Ward places too much weight on the value of 'opera' as an ethnographic tool, stating that "for all but the 5% or so
(predominantly male) who carried the high culture, the theatre was the literal embodiment of Chinese culture and values. Evaluations of this sort construct producers of culture as having command and creative autonomy over a culture which is then recreated by the audience only in the act of consumption.

David Arkush's contribution to Unofficial China (1989) discusses love and marriage as seen in the early 20th century Dingxian peasant 'operas' (yangge). Arkush begins with the widely held assumptions that 'official' culture stresses the dominant parent-child relationship and affectionless marriage. Peasant 'operas', however, contain more sexual adventure and impiety than Arkush assumes cultural codes would allow, and so he concludes that people were either dissatisfied with conventional morality, or more libidinous and impious than generally assumed. This is a provocative account; but, like Ward, Arkush overemphasizes the value of peasant opera as a literal embodiment of peasant values, and interprets it as evidence that peasants actively practiced the values found in drama.

I find two basic problems with such interpretations: first; theatrical narratives are indeed a means to escape the monotony of life by inverting cultural norms, but these inversions took place on stage and do not prove that similar inversions took place on the street or in the home. Second, the idea that village cultural expressions are produced in opposition or separation from 'elite' or 'official' culture suggests a cultural dichotomy which may exist in narrative, but does not necessarily have a similar manifestation in day-to-day living. While we need to consider how people made their own cultures, it is also necessary to avoid over-extending the perceived

27 Barbara Ward 'Regional Operas and their Audiences' in Johnson et.al., Popular Culture in Late Imperial China, 1985, p. 187.
capacity or desire of people to create and maintain independent or oppositional cultural expressions.

II) Mass Culture

Appearing at the opposite extreme to 'popular culture' is the cultural history that represents elite attempts (conscious or otherwise) to create a mass culture through popularized versions of elite texts. In *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, James Hayes' 'Written Material in the Village World' conducts a survey of the types of written material possibly found in the villages of south China. Here he finds a variety of literate and semi-literate individuals and specialists, including teachers, letter writers, ceremonial experts, and entertainers. These people played an intermediary role in transmission of ideas and values to 'lower levels' of society which were 'entertained' rather than 'entertaining' and 'facilitated' rather than 'facilitating', and in general, playing a passive role in the accumulation of knowledge.  

In the same volume, Judith Berling considers the overlap of education and entertainment in the transmission of the *Romance of the Three Teachings*, a classic that describes moral wrongdoings in order to expose and correct them. Works of this nature were propagated not by the state, but by gentry whose popular action can be explained by the declining role of government. Central to these works were the Wang Yangming values of moral management, the promotion of 'work ethics', and self-improvement through morally responsible behavior. Thus Berling considers the novel to have been a central influence in the didactic teaching of elite values.  

Daniel Overmyer also considers didactic literature in the form of the *Baojuan (Precious Scrolls)*,

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29 James Hayes 'Specialists and Written Material in the Village World' in Johnson et.al., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, 1985, p. 110.

30 Judith Berling 'Religion and Popular Culture' in Johnson et.al., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, 1985, pp.188-218.
which include sectarian writings ranging from Buddhist scriptures to literary accounts of salvationist scriptures and parables, and later spirit writing. Within the genre there appears a duality of values between Confucian and Buddhist values, with Buddhism providing the theoretical support for dissent. Overmyer argues that because baojuan were produced for those at mid-level educational status they should reflect that cultural level.

Hayes, Berling, and Overmyer cannot be faulted for their treatment of the subject as an elite text, but in each case there is little indication of how these texts were received by the audience. As a result there is no solid evidence to suggest how audiences perceived themselves in relation to the material, except as consumers of culture. The problem with the interpretation then lies not in the treatment of the texts, but in the assumption that they can be read as representations of the target audience. In Overmyer's case, for example, the dispute between Confucianism and Buddhism was probably waged between literate factions that, as Overmyer points out, were trying to win those of mid-level educational status over to their way of seeing the world. Baojuan, therefore, should be seen first as sectarian religious propaganda. That these texts had an effect on their target audience is certain, but the nature of the effect can only be determined after a careful consideration of how texts were propagated and read.31

III) Modes of Reading

The common point of reference in most 'popular culture' and 'mass culture' studies is their exposition on texts, whether literary, graphic, spoken, or performed. While the cases outlined above have given adequate treatment to the production of these texts, they fall short in indicating how the text was 'appropriated'. There is insufficient recognition of the fact that while physical

texts remain unchanged over time and space, the interpretation of that text may vary widely from one reader to the next depending on their identity and the circumstances of reading.

In his discussions of the Tian Hou cult of Fujian and Taiwan, and of diverse forms of Chinese death ritual, James Watson provides one of the best overviews of how cultural texts are read by different audiences. According to Watson, the 'Aunt Lin' and later Tian Hou cults were more localized than the Buddhist sectarian White Lotus cults. But the former were also subject to more thorough manipulation and scrutiny by authorities, as the 'Aunt Lin' cult was transformed through government patronage and then re-imposed on the village. Within the given structure, however, people were still free to pursue their own interpretations. In *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, Watson finds that while funeral and mourning rites were surprisingly standard across China, disposal of the body had diverse forms from burial to cremation to entombment in caves. The most important point in both arguments is that the integration of Chinese culture was made possible by the ambiguity of its symbols which, while enforcing ritual, also allowed for different readings of the same symbol. This then allowed for unity under praxis, while the locality was able to maintain its parochial belief system.

Rawski challenges Watson on both his methodology and conclusions, arguing that when one inverts the anthropologists' 'worms eye view' of the distinct locality for the historians' 'birds eye view' of a system of symbolic reference that extends beyond the locality. It then becomes clear that the Chinese state was remarkably successful in standardizing not only practice, but

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33 James Watson 'The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites' in Watson, et.al., *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, 1988, pp. 3-19.
belief. So while beliefs appear isolated at the village level, an inter-village comparison demonstrates a unity of belief that helped to make up the abstract entity of 'China'.

Whether cultures are truly parochial, sharing only in reference to standard texts, or whether they represent a certain esprit of the nation, somehow extending beyond the local to provide people with a consciousness of community, is a point of debate beyond the China field. Similar quests for 'Frenchness', or 'Dutchness' in other historiographical discussions have drawn criticism from social scientists who believe that the imposition of such terms laden with contemporary values onto a pre-modern society is anachronistic. Critics of this methodology insist instead on recognizing cultural texts as reflective of their own time and space, and as products of the historical circumstances that gave rise to them, not as modern constructs teleologically connected with the past.

In their investigation into journalism and fiction of the late Qing and Republican eras, Leo Lee and Andrew Nathan find that 'popular culture' (culture conceived and consumed by the same people), is replaced by an engineered, controlled, and universal 'mass culture'. This is most obvious in the late Qing boom in the periodical press, which was prompted by a growing interest in contemporary events and the growth of a mass reading public. Commercial fiction, however, soon undermined much of the serious message, suggesting that there was a gap between the perceived target of fiction, and the audience themselves. This occurred when the people resisted the imposition of a mass 'populist' political culture and maintained their consumption of 'popular' culture- or pulp fiction that was made available to them through the same mechanism as the

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34 Evelyn Rawski 'A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Ritual' in Rawski et.al., Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China, 1988, pp. 20-34.

35 I refer here specifically to the debate between Robert Darnton and Roger Chartier. Darnton has argued for the uses of symbolic content in history, versus Chartier's insistence that texts can only be understood in terms of their production and readership. See Journal of Modern History (57) 1985 pp. 682-95, (58) 1986 pp. 218-34. On 'Dutchness' see Simon Schama The Embarrassment of Riches, 1987.
political press. This indicates that printed media provided greater latitude for control, but also provided more opportunity for escape from or resist dominant culture.36

Lee and Nathan's observations can best be compared with Perry Link's Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies in which the author argues that the reading public was conscious in its choice of materials, and resisted 'Western' literature as offensive to Chinese morals. Link reiterates the point that literature and literacy could serve the dual purposes of nation building (which statesmen and political reformers like Liang Qichao would have preferred) and pleasure and profit (to which literacy was often applied). It is this popular literacy to which Link attaches his most salient, but also most arguable point that pulp-fiction was an expression of consciousness and of social context.37 Link's argument is most supportive of Watson's position that there was a discontinuity between the efforts of the state to direct a mass culture, and the public's willingness to accept it. But like Rawski, Link insists that the main point of the exercise is to determine the state of public 'consciousness'.

Robert Hegel investigates the transformation of a tale of the Tang dynasty general Li Mi when presented to different audiences. Hegel finds that the tale existed at multiple-levels, with elite narratives tending to emphasize politics, and social or martial shame. The less educated, on the other hand, tended to patronize narratives emphasizing the supernatural, often involving the taking or giving of the Mandate of Heaven, and morality tales that sanctioned the behavior of honourable officials or criticized unruly ones. Between these divergent emphases on the nature of politics there is a common bond in the treatment of pride and arrogance, self-preservation, and the sometimes didactic preservation of a Confucian political ideal. The audiences comprise a

36 Leo Lee and Andrew Nathan 'The Beginnings of Mass Culture' in Johnson et.al., Popular Culture in Late Imperial China 1985, p. 395.
37 Perry Link Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies, 1981.
spectrum of overlapping designations, with a close connection between audience and content, but also a central unitary ideology that transcends particular tastes.\(^{38}\)

Tanaka Issei also examines different settings for local drama in the market town, village, and lineage hall, each of which represented a different social stratum and hosted a different performance. Tanaka puts greater emphasis on historical context, arguing that development must be studied in reference to local power, since when landlords were strong they took measures to constrain local creativity out of fear of the spread of heterodox ideas. When local power was weak, as in the late Ming, local drama flourished. Thus, unlike the argument of Rawski and Johnson outlined above, Tanaka makes the important point that cultural texts are dependent upon their immediate contexts, rather than 'consciousness'.\(^{39}\)

Just as much Chinese writing on *minjian* culture has been involved with establishing the roots of either political or cultural identity, Western writing on similar forms has often attached extraneous values to the original text. From missionary ethnography, to the search for 'mass' and 'popular' culture, and the quest for 'consciousness', Chinese cultural production and consumption has been pulled in many directions and toward an uncertain end. And yet there are positive signs that cultural history has begun to treat its subject not as an ideology; but, as Chartier suggests, as "a cultural history of the social realm that has as its goal the comprehension of configurations and motifs - of representations of the social sphere - that give unconscious expression to the positions and the interests of social agents as they interact, and that serve to describe society as those social agents thought it was or wished it to be."\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) Robert Hegel 'Distinguishing Levels of Audiences for Ming-Ch'ing Vernacular Literature' in Johnson et.al., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* 1985, p. 142.
\(^{39}\) Tanaka Issei 'The Social and Historical Context of Ming-Ch'ing Local Drama' in Johnson et.al., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* 1985 pp. 143-160.
\(^{40}\) Roger Chartier *Cultural History* 1988, p. 6.
2) The Production of Print Culture in North China

2.1 Production in a Prescriptive Society

Ursula Franklin has argued that there are two ways in which a utensil or art object can be produced, and that production choices are profound statements on the social organization and value systems of that society. The first mode of production is holistic, in which the artisan plays a personal role in all facets of production, and is entirely responsible for the outcome of the product. In painting, for example, artists must select the raw materials and colours, choose a subject, and render it to the best of their ability. They might choose the same subject a second time, but because they start again from the beginning, the outcome is inevitably different. The second mode of production is prescriptive, engaging a sequence of unit processes that are replicated and predictable. The worker uses a standard set of tools to produce a part that can be precisely combined with another part, possibly produced by another worker. In prescription, control is taken out of the hands of the individual artisan and delivered to an organizational body. The result is uniformity, as well as conformity. As Franklin points out, the presence of either process in a society is a "diagnostic indication of the social order of the society that employed such production methods."\(^{41}\)

An extreme example of prescription can be found in the *Qinding Daqing Huidian Shui* (Collected Statutes of the Qing Dynasty) which fills dozens of volumes with precise instructions on all the ceremonies of the Imperial Court. These include the preparation and exhibition of palace Door Gods (including the 'General of the Clouds'), the God of Fortune, the 'Five Poison Screens' and other auspicious or exorcistic emblems. The passage on Door Gods includes precise

instructions on when the pictures should be hung up and taken down again. This is followed *ad nauseam* by instructions on the precise colours and method of painting, the preparation of material, and qualities of paper and silk to be used on the various grades of Door Gods, and God of Fortune pictures, etc. The details appear extreme and often redundant to a contemporary observer, but seen in the context of the late Qing court the excess is an unequivocal statement about the social and ritual organization of that society.\(^\text{42}\)

The passage, however, only confirms the ritual extremes of the late-Qing court that are self-evident in the detail, composition, and quality of the actual picture. When investigating the production of an artwork or other article drawn, carved, or molded by the hand, the 'text' of the article can be read as accurately as any written description. All things considered, Door God painting was nothing if not prescriptive, and from that assumption we can know something of the Door God painters without ever knowing their names.

To approach art entirely as social production, however, is to reduce the role of the artist to one of the unit processes. In the case of *nianhua* it is difficult to see the artist as much more than a unit because of the overwhelming anonymity of the profession, but there is no need to entirely dehumanize the subject. Most *nianhua* artists will remain forever anonymous, but surviving data and living memory can substantiate the technical analysis, making it possible to create a social profile of the artist. In a few cases names and biographical data are available to help demonstrate that within this highly prescriptive pictorial form there was still room for individual agency. So while considering that art is largely a social production, the artist is still a key link, deserving inclusion in any discussion.\(^\text{43}\)

\(^{42}\) Li Hongzhang et al., *Qinding Daqing Huidian Shili* 1886a, p. 16687.

\(^{43}\) The masculine 'he' or 'his' is used whenever referring to an anonymous artist because of the high probability that the artist was in fact a man. Women's role in production will be noted where appropriate.
2.1.1 The Artist in Rural Society

Artists engaged in producing nianhua have exhibited the full spectrum of training, from rank amateur to academy graduate. Many Yangliuqing masters were well known and widely respected for their abilities. On occasion even highly accomplished painters like the Shanghai artist Qian Huian (1833-1911) turned their hand to nianhua. Qian, who had been born in Shanghai, initially made a name for himself in the late-Qing 'Bird and Flower' school of painting, and was best known as a figure painter. During the early Guangxu era (r.1875-1908) Qian accepted an invitation to work in Yangliuqing, where he spent several years as a nianhua designer for larger firms like Qijianlong and Aizhuzhai. His work at this time represents scenes from xiqu and scenes of rustic simplicity, including snow-filled gardens, idealized fishing and farming families, peach orchards, and festive celebrations. Later Qian turned his attention to illustration of the classics.\textsuperscript{44} Aside from Qian's nianhua examples, legacy was represented in several manuals on the subject of painting figures that were used by Yangliuqing painters in fashioning prints.\textsuperscript{45}

In general, however, few artists held status above what Alexeev's informant in Zhuxianzhen called a 'half bottle of vinegar,' (banping zhi cu) implying they were neither rank amateurs, nor fully competent artists:

These printers are half tradesmen and half artist, their position is somewhere between that of old style Confucian scholar and that of artisan.... But because they learned to paint, they find their true calling in picture-shops. This half-learned state of mind also shows up in their work. They stick to convention, and in the end they do not depart from Confucianist method, not realizing that illiterate buyers of nianhua would not really understand them. The script that these pseudo-scholars write [on nianhua] for the printing workshop is basically comprehensible, but contains errors just like what Chinese call banping zhi cu (those who have a smattering of learning). A picture will

\textsuperscript{44} A Ying, Zhongguo Nianhua Fazhan Shilue 1954, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{45} Bo Songnian Zhongguo Nianhua Shi 1986, pp. 69-70.
sometimes contain literary references, or folk ballads and vulgar language, and a large proportion contain references to the classics. 46

Gao Tongxuan (1835-1906) was an artist who distinguished himself working as a nianhua designer in the late Qing dynasty. Born in Yangliuqing to a family of cloth merchants, Gao spent his youth traveling with his father between Tianjin and Suzhou and obtaining a primary education in the primers Baijia Xing (Myriad Family Names), Qianzi Wen (Thousand Character Classic), Sanzi Jing (Three Character Classic). By the time he was fifteen, Gao had studied the classics and obtained a respectable level of painting skill. With the decline of the family business Gao began to paint portraits for a living before arriving back in Yangliuqing where he spent the remainder of his career designing nianhua. 47

A local legend of Wuqiang provides a rare narrative insight into how nianhua printers saw the originators of their craft as being a divinely inspired local scholar. During the Wanli era (1647-1661) of the Ming dynasty, in the Wuqiang village of South Songjiacun, there once lived an impoverished scholar named Song Liang who struggled to support himself and his ailing mother by scavenging scrap paper. One day Song Liang was returning home with a roll of papers and a couple of shaobing biscuits for his mother when he was suddenly caught in a downpour. Rushing into a nearby Guandi temple he set down his load and sat down to take a nap. Suddenly Song Liang was surprised to see a robust and red faced fellow stride into the temple and say to him "Scholar, help!" To this Song Liang replied, "Uncle, what is your difficulty?" Saying nothing the fellow merely unrolled the paper on the ground and lay down upon it. Thinking him to be starving Song Liang selflessly gave the fellow one of his shaobing. Wolfing down the cake the red-faced fellow instantly stood up and saluted his benefactor. At that moment Song Liang awoke

46 Cited in B. Riftin 'San Guo Yanyi Zhong de "Chang Banpo" Gushi Nianhua' Lishi Wenwu 1(66), 1999, p.45
and realized that he had been dreaming, but was surprised to find that his scrap paper had been covered with colourful pictures of a red-faced martial figure that matched the Guandi idol in the temple. On returning home Song Liang was told by his mother that he had been granted these pictures by Guandi himself, and that he should go out to sell them. From that point Song Liang's mother made a speedy recovery, and the pictures of Guandi sold out quickly. Seeing that this would be a profitable business Song Liang opened a picture shop in Wuqiang where he prospered and grew in fame as an artist in the production of pictures of Guandi and all manner of icons.48

But while local scholars were involved in production (in fact and in legend), in most other cases it is too optimistic to assume even a sub-standard level of classical training. Some forms of painting could be taught as a trade, such as in the Gaomi village of Gongpomiao (Grandfather-Grandmother Temple), where in 1761 five brothers from the Zhang family began their training as temple painters, a skill which they later diverted into nianhua.49 In Yangjiabu the biographies of even the best known artists indicate little training beyond apprenticeship in the printing workshop.

The lack of advanced training for most artists in the nianhua trade supports what is apparent from a review of nianhua themselves. Village print was not based on informed opinions of the classics and other written texts, but on vernacular understandings of those texts that were available through basic education, oral culture forms such as xiqu and storytelling, and through exposure to temple murals and statuary. The print, therefore, was the product of fluctuating meanings, but by the nature of its production the visual aspect of the prints were bound together by the fundamental structure of duplication, resulting in a standardized iconography.

2.1.2 The Social Production of Print

The master artisan only represents the leading edge in a much more complex system of production, and it is in this production that the art form most appears as prescriptive. The standard method of wood-block print production that is still in use in Yangliuqing, Yangjiabu, Pingdu, Wuqiang, and Zhuxianzhen first involves tracing the outline of a desired picture onto a block of hardwood (usually pear), which is then carved out in relief. Separate blocks containing the colour forms are then produced for each of the four to six colours used in the picture. To produce a print the artisan clamps both the printing block and a stack of paper onto a specially designed table. Using a large brush made of coconut fibre, ink is applied to the block bearing the outline and a sheet of paper is drawn across and pressed onto its face to get a copy. The sheet is then hung out of the way through a slot in the table and the process repeated for each sheet of paper.

Once all the sheets are imprinted they are returned to their original position, the outline block is replaced with a colour block and the process is repeated until all the colours are applied. In some cases the prints receive a final detailing by hand, the faces of the figures may be touched up with red, and the eyes dotted with white to give them a lively appearance. Other prints may receive a sprinkle of golden dust for greater auspiciousness, but generally the emphasis is on mass production and so such attention is kept to a minimum. By following this process a printer working alone is able to produce up to six hundred copies per day, more if a group of printers works in assembly-line fashion. In other centres, including Yangliuqing and Gaomi, this method is used only for the outline which is then coloured and detailed by hand. This allows the printer to obtain a much higher aesthetic standard, although a much lower production level.
The prescriptive standard of the printing process produced a high degree of uniformity among each of the thousands of prints produced by any individual workshop. But nianhua demonstrate that the prescriptive 'ethic' extended even beyond the mechanical process to produce virtual replication among prints that originated from different workshops using different printing blocks. This can be shown thanks to the fortunate coincidence of three sets of prints illustrating part of the Tang dynasty historical tale of Xue Rengui, each collected by Chavannes in 1907. For comparative purposes I consider one item selected from each set, alternately titled 'A New Engraving of the Tang Dynasty', 'A New Version of the Tang Dynasty', and 'Xue Rengui' (fig. 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). Despite their differing titles these three vertical hangings depict precisely the same scene in each of their four registers, except for subtle differences that prove they were not printed from the same block. The most likely scenario is that each of the three printers had access to a model produced by an amateur painter, which each printer then reproduced by sketching or tracing.

This procedure can be seen again in a comparison of two prints, one each from Pingdu, and nearby Gaomi in eastern Shandong. Each print (fig. 2.4, 2.5) depicts farming activities arranged in seasonal order, and is placed in a decorative boundary with the accompanying blessing 'Spring, summer, autumn, winter, peace in all the four seasons.' Both depict the same subjects, and their composition is so similar that one could only have been traced from the other, or as in the above, from an unknown master copy. But because the boundaries of the print have been altered from one to the other, there is a sense that the makers of the print felt a need to produce the print with some individual identity. Although content could be replicated, it was necessary to alter form, perhaps because of the influence of a guild.\footnote{Danielle Eliasberg \textit{Imagerie Populaire Chinoise du Nouvel An} 1976, pp. 90, 96, 98.}
In the late Qing dynasty over one hundred printing workshops from Yangjiabu united to form one such printer's guild in order to guard against the competition of surrounding villages that were not under contract from Yangjiabu printers. While exact dates of operation are not available, the organization continued operations in some capacity well into the Republican era.\textsuperscript{52}

The regulations by which Yangjiabu printers were expected to abide included a ruling that they were to commence printing only on the tenth day of the tenth lunar month, and end production on the tenth of layue (twelfth lunar month). In addition, the guild guaranteed the copyright of individual printing houses to have unchallenged control over the images which they introduced. The guild also barred outsiders from selling coloured prints in the lucrative Yangjiabu marketplace. Once a year the guild organizers would host a six day xiqu festival, during which they would occasionally take the stage to clarify the regulations - an effective strategy given the large numbers of people known to have attended such events.\textsuperscript{53}

While the guild helped to preserve stylistic and market integrity, its main purpose was to shut out major competitors from Yangliuqing, and the local Yangliuqing agents. During the Xianfeng reign (1851-1861) the Yangliuqing based nianhua shops Huachenghao and Fuqinglong had begun to transport their own material to Weixian and nearby Hanting where they sold them during the winter months. This is confirmed in a poem by Pei Xingchuan who wrote that in Weixian 'until hanshe (Cold Food Festival- or Qingming, i.e.'Grave Sweeping Festival') shops sell Yangliuqing pictures.'\textsuperscript{54} Local printers had their own way of dealing with such intrusions and soon after, either by contract or by appropriation, local printers in Hanting, and especially

\textsuperscript{52} The last head of the guild, Yang Shengde, was in his thirties during the rule of Yuan Shikai. This indicates that the guild was operational at least into the second decade of the twentieth century.
\textsuperscript{54} Cited in Chai Maozhi Feng Zheng 1991, p. 15.
Cangshang began to produce replicas of prints from Yangliuqing, selling them as 'Yangliuqing pictures' on the local *nianhua* market.\(^{55}\) This would have impinged on Yangjiabu, leading to the formation of the guild through which Yangjiabu tried to shut out the colour-print competition from Yangliuqing workshops and their associates. Yet there was no effort to shut out the general style of print, since the Yangliuqing style *xiqu* print had become a representative Yangjiabu product by the time of Alexeev's visit in 1907.

Guild regulations only applied to full-print *nianhua*, and not to the hand coloured prints in the Yangliuqing style. The effect of this can be judged by the fact that researchers in the early 1950s found only hand coloured replicas of Yangliuqing prints in Cangshang, suggesting that Cangshang artisans had not broken into the Yangjiabu market as producers of colour-print *nianhua*.\(^{56}\) The protectionism apparent in this situation indicates that since Yangjiabu artists had access to Yangliuqing skills but chose not to use them, the production of the colour-print variation of *nianhua* was more lucrative in the predominantly rural Shandong market. This is further indicated by the evidence that Yangjiabu print had evolved from manual painting in the mid-Qing, to colour-print by the early Republic.\(^{57}\)

The effect of these regulations on the appearance of *nianhua* can be seen in a comparison of Yangjiabu Kitchen God prints.\(^{58}\) For *nianhua* printers anywhere in China, the Kitchen God was a staple product. Judging from the superior quality of what may be seen as 'Yangjiabu style' Kitchen Gods, these would have enjoyed particularly brisk sales, making it important for every Yangjiabu printer to keep them in stock. But because guild regulations forbade duplication we


\(^{56}\) For Cangshang prints see *Huadong Minjian Nianhua* 1955.

\(^{57}\) Xie Changyi *Shandong Minjian Nianhua* 1979, no pagination.

\(^{58}\) I use the term Kitchen God in deference to common usage, even though, as will be demonstrated, Stove God is a more accurate translation.
now see a wide variety of prints exhibiting individual characteristics, while still maintaining the basic Yangjiabu format that could capitalize on the general appeal of the style without breaking guild regulations (fig. 2.6, 2.7, 2.8). In this regard the guild, rather than acting as a standardizing influence over print, encouraged diversity in form, although not always in theme.

The first lithographic presses began to appear in Shanghai in the early 1880s, and by 1891 were used in nianhua production. The earliest verifiable example of a lithograph nianhua was produced in this year by San Loh He (sic. Sanliuxuan), and was based on a painting by Qian Huian, the Shanghai artist who had earlier worked as a print designer in Yangliuqing.59 The picture represents the theme of 'The Five Cassias of the Dou Family',60 and according to information contained in the text was based on a draft by Yun Shouping (1633-1690), often described as the most famous bird and flower painter of the Qing.61 While it is uncertain whether the painting was first produced in Yangliuqing or after Qian's return to Shanghai, the style strongly resembles the nianhua form which he had helped to establish in the former location.

But while the Shanghai lithographic presses were capable of introducing both contemporary event and technically refined painting into print, material collected by Berthold Laufer in 1902-1904 shows that the same presses were also actively producing some of the same narratives found in nianhua from both North China and Suzhou. By the turn of the century, and probably earlier, San Loh He had been joined in nianhua production by the printing studios Feiying Ge and Wenyi Zhai. The various presses competed in the production of portraits of

59 See discussion in Gan Tjiang-tek 'Some Chinese Popular Block-prints' The Wonder of Man's Ingenuity 1962. The print is held at Leiden's Rijksmuseum voor Volkendunde.
60 Dou Yujun was an official of the Five Dynasties period who had five sons, each of which went on to achieve the highest honours in the official examinations. Like many nianhua themes this is based on a classically inspired fable which had been propagated through nianhua as a common auspicious symbol expressing the wish for many honourable sons.
61 See for example, Ralph Croizier Art and Revolution in Modern China 1988, p. 11.
beautiful women and children, historical romances such as *Romance of the Western Chamber*, *Legends of Yue Fei*, *Legend of White Snake*, the Xue Rengui tale of *Conquest of the East*, *Journey to the West*, *Loyang Bridge* and various court-room dramas. But while the designs were based on wood-block prints, and destined for the same market as wood-block prints, the graphic technique and vivid colouring improved on the original product, making the xylographic versions appear crude in comparison.

The technology of lithography began to supplant xylography in several nianhua production sites as early as 1909, when Yangjiabu's Hoxingde workshop acquired four presses from Qingdao. These machines, however, may have been used for printing school textbooks rather than nianhua. In Yangliuqing local printers began to use mechanical print in 1914, and by 1927 most of the large printing work-shops had purchased manual or electric lithograph presses. Output from these presses was recorded as 16,000 prints in two shifts, while the manual variety could produce 1,500 prints in the same amount of time. Cengxing, one of Chaomidian's larger workshops, had three electric presses capable of producing 48,000 prints per day.

By 1927 there were still seven or eight workshops in surrounding villages that persisted in using wood-block print, although these were noted as suffering from the mechanized competition. This was not because of any difference in quality, but because it often took several months for a complete batch of prints to be produced through the extended cottage industry, compared to lithograph prints where all production was done on site. Secondly, the net cost of producing prints by lithography was estimated at Y7 to Y8/1000, compared to Y10/1000 for hand made prints. The use of mechanical print in village industry has important implications for

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62 Based on Laufer collection, 1902-04.
63 *Yangjiabu Cunzhi* 1993, p. 387.
64 *Jingji Banyue Kan* 1(3) 1927, p. 32.
the social production of the handicraft - most important being the relatively low labour input. While this allowed the printing workshop to reduce costs and production time, mechanization must have devastated the cottage nianhua processing industry, leaving thousands of skilled crafts-people unemployed in surrounding villages.

It should not be presumed that xylography became obsolete with the introduction of lithography. As late as 1927 Clarence Day noted that while "some of the temples in East China are beginning to procure brightly coloured lithographs from Shanghai printers", wood-block prints continued to hold a share of the market, although Day felt that the days of xylography were numbered. In North China, Nachbauer and Dubosc had no problem finding wood-block prints in the late 1920s, and Wang Shangyi collected some 250 wood-block prints, many from the dispersed Zhuxianzhen industry, all across China in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1937 Shi Shizhen was able to amass a collection of 3,000 wood-block printed 'paper horse' in rural Zhejiang, suggesting that Day's projections about the dominance of machine made prints had not been entirely realized.

The result of this irregular and incomplete infusion of technology into the printing industry was the co-existence in the marketplace of distinct modes of production, and the graphic standards which they carried. Traditionally, the relatively high cost of hand coloured Yangliuqing prints would have limited their circulation to the middle-class, with the simpler form of color wood-block print retaining its place in rural marketplaces. But as mechanization and transport innovation made these more refined prints competitive in rural markets, the graphic style and

67 See later discussion of the 1937 Hangzhou nianhua exhibit for further details.
'taste' that had been developed for the middle-class was extended throughout Yangliuqing's market network. Suddenly it was possible for any individual, regardless of class or social standing, to see a picture designed by an established 'Bird and Flower' painter like Qian Huian posted next to a relatively crude Yangjiabu or Pingdu picture in the marketplace. And regardless of what people actually knew of any of these artists, it was now possible for them to compare, and perhaps to think that one looked odd in comparison to the other.

The question of the standards introduced through the more broadly prescriptive production has important implications for our understanding of how iconographic and other graphic forms were established. In his study of the Tian Hou cult of Fujian, Watson argues that centralized power over interpretation of religious icons originated with the state. In the interest of gaining control over religious cults, the state promoted popular deities through an officially sanctioned cult 'structure'. This was achieved indirectly by sponsoring a select group of deities through temple construction and other activities. And yet within that state-sponsored structure, people were free to fill in the 'content' of the cult in terms of the more parochial variations in beliefs and practices. Therefore, cults and deities became 'standardized' in form, if not in meaning.68

Evidence presented later in this manuscript will substantiate Watson's claims to some extent. But the evidence collected here indicates that visual form was most directly controlled by the producers of cult iconography, and their production processes, which were in turn responsive to the demands of the market. So while Watson's study is a useful introduction to the process of cult formation and the standardizing influence of the state, it must be recognized that the family,

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the environment, and commerce also played formative roles in standardizing the appearance of icons.

Using Skinner's model of marketing and social structure, the market, a relatively fixed entity and again a form of 'structure', would have contributed to conformity in standards in the market region. From this it follows that growth in markets for printed icons from centralized producers such as Yangjiabu or Wuqiang would have promoted standardization in icons. This could not have been achieved through the holistic mode of production since items produced in this manner bear less uniformity from one locality to the next, or even from one household to the next. Thus, for any group or individual wishing to exert political or economic control over their environment, prescriptive production lent itself most directly to the maintenance of power and control.

However, we can see from the form and production of nianhua that no authoritative agent or commercial interest was in complete control of the production processes, or of the iconography. The North China village printing industry did develop in a prescriptive society, but it was not perfectly prescriptive. Thus, as per Watson's argument, the state may indeed have 'superscribed' local society, but from the perspective of nianhua production, it appears that the state had little other choice. What appears as conscious superscription was more likely the failure to achieve circumscription.

2.2 The Distribution of Cultural Capital

While a community that specializes in prescriptive production enjoys control over its market region, for those same reasons it is also controlled by other outside forces. Yangjiabu,
Wuqiang, Zongjiazhuang and the other printing centres were at the centre of an organizational network that assembled resources, produced goods, and redistributed them to retailers and consumers. As a result the workshops had primary control over the images they produced. Not all steps, however, were directly under village control since distribution of the items required a larger infrastructural network that was under the joint management of the state system and merchant networks. These agents, therefore, played a crucial role in the change and development of the *nianhua* industry, especially during the tumultuous years of the early 20th century. This can best be shown by examining the state of production and trade in each of the *nianhua* centres currently under discussion.

### 2.2.1 Transportation and Trade

There has been an extended academic debate over whether the North China agricultural economy grew or was stagnant during the late Qing/Republican period. The present study applies the respective hypotheses according to period and region as they best apply, finding that while some regions were indeed stagnant, others prospered under economic change. Kenneth Pomeranz's study of economic, social and ecological change in the Shandong/Hebei/Henan border areas found that during the late Qing/Republican era, North China experienced a dichotomous development. Changes included increasing integration into coastal markets, disintegration of older Grand Canal based economic ties, and government abandonment of the Grand Canal and Yellow River. The overall result was that while regions with coastal and rail links realized economic growth, Huang-Yun declined from a prosperous commercial region to the agricultural periphery.
While all the print centres under investigation here fall outside of the region which
Pomeranz strictly defines as Huang-Yun, Zhuxianzhen could easily be included in the new
periphery. Meanwhile Yangliuqing, the eastern Shandong villages, and less so Wuqiang, are
excellent examples of regions that initially benefited from integration into the new
infrastructure.\textsuperscript{69} It should be recognized that production statistics for the more prosperous
industries are difficult to substantiate. At best they are based on Republican era government
estimates of the quantity of paper used, and at worst on the very long memory of trades people
interviewed decades later, who sometimes based their estimates on how many 'ox cart loads' were
sold. But even if the actual output were only a fraction of the following estimates, the numbers
still indicate an extremely vibrant industry with impressive print runs. And if we accept early
twentieth century reports that 'every household in China' seemed at the very least to have a
Wealth, Kitchen and Door God picture, it is not difficult to imagine a market capable of
absorbing this production.\textsuperscript{70}

A) East Shandong

In the Late Qing/early Republic, eastern Shandong experienced the opening of new trade
corridors facilitated by the new German built Jiao-Ji Railway begun in 1901, and connecting
Jinan and Qingdao by 1904. The Yan-Wei Highway also connected Weixian with the coastal city
of Yantai, and via steamship lines with Tianjin and Dalian in the 1920s. After 1905 Yuan Shikai,
Governor of Shandong and Zhili, supported Jinan in establishing a trade district extending to
Zhoucun (which had long been a tax free entrepot), and Weixian - the county seat of Yangjiabu.

\textsuperscript{69} Kenneth Pomeranz \textit{The Making of a Hinterland} 1993.
\textsuperscript{70} Incidentally, while the numbers seem fantastic, 500 people, each producing an average of 600 prints per day
(a normal output by modern standards) for a period of three months, could easily obtain this level of
production.
This development effectively created trade corridors between Jinan, Yantai, and Qingdao, the benefits of which would have reached the printing centres of Gaomi (Jiangzhuangzhen) and Pingdu (Zongjiazhuang).\textsuperscript{71}

One observer in 1912 described the railway as "a mighty artery full of blood and life...flowing through the Province," with the result that "the innumerable sleeping villages on either hand...are waking to fresh vitality and energy."\textsuperscript{72} In similar circumstances, another Western observer traveling by road described the route connecting Weixian and Jinan as having traffic so heavy as to "often impede progress."\textsuperscript{73} While these observations do not suffer from excessive objectivity, other developments, such as the exploitation of iron and coal deposits, and the British American Tobacco Company's (BAT) development of Shandong, and especially Weixian as one of China's top tobacco producers suggest some foundation for a boom in regional transport and resource based production.\textsuperscript{74} There is no reason to suspect that nianhua printers would not have taken equal advantage of this unique era in which technology such as trains and lithography, co-existed with coolies and wood-block prints.

Data from Yangjiabu shows that the sixty shops present in the village in the 1860s grew to a total of 160 by the 1920s, with an estimated combined annual output of between fifty and seventy million prints. These enterprises ranged from single family operations employing one or two people, to expansive organizations which maintained branch operations in surrounding villages, and throughout North China from Manchuria to northern Jiangsu. In one specific case a co-operative enterprise was established between Yangjiabu and the Gongxingyi workshop in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} 'Qingmo Jinan Weixian ji Zhoucun Kaibi Shangbu Shiliao' \textit{Lishi Dangan} 1988, pp. 27.
\item \textsuperscript{73} See Joseph Esherick, \textit{The Origins of the Boxer Uprising} 1987, pp. 10-11.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Sherman Cochrane \textit{Big Business in China} 1980, p. 34.
\end{itemize}
Zongjiazhuang, where Yangjiabu entrepreneurs continued to train workers as late as 1924. Martin Yang provides further evidence that village print enterprises were able to maintain their markets in spite of urban commercialization, pointing out that even though the Shandong village of Taitou was near the city of Qingdao, and transportation had greatly improved, villagers still went to the county town to buy their festive supplies (including nianhua) since the city did not produce them. 76

B) Wuqiang

In the case of Wuqiang county, inter-regional transport was reliant on inland water-ways, with the Ziya River providing access from nearby Xiaofan to the Grand Canal and Tianjin in the north, and the Fuyang River leading to Hengshui in the south. In the twentieth century Wuqiang did not gain the benefit of a direct railway link, nor were major roadways installed until the Cangzhou-Shijiazhuang highway was constructed in 1920-21. 77 Fortunately for Wuqiang, its waterways continued to act as a transport link well into the twentieth century. 78 In the early twentieth century there were 144 workshops in operation in Wuqiang town alone, with an unknown number of printing houses in surrounding villages. In one year in particular the industry consumed as many as 3000 jian of paper - a total of one hundred million sheets of paper. A 1913 provincial trade survey shows that during the early Republican era Wuqiang continued to maintain a high level of production, still supporting approximately forty printing workshops with

75 Xie Changyi Shandong Minjian Nianhua 1979, p.109. Two individuals involved in this enterprise were Zong Xize and Zong Youming. Zong Youming was the proprietor of a printing workshop in Pingdu, however it has not been confirmed whether or not this was Gongxiayingi.

76 C.K. Yang Taitou 1960, p.199 It is not true that the city did not produce nianhua since by this time at least one firm from Zongjiazhuang had moved to Qingdao. A Kitchen God print in Day's 1929 article, collected in Qingdao, indicates that Yangjiabu prints were being sold in Qingdao at this time, although it is also possible that a branch, such as that from Pingdu was supplying the urban market there.

77 The road bed had initially been built to support a railway but was turned over to regular traffic after the project was canceled.

a combined annual output of approximately 32,000,000 nianhua, an average of 800,000 items per workshop. A branch industry in Dongfengtai, northeast of Tianjin, had a further output of an estimated 10,000,000 prints. Production continued to be strong in the 1920s with eight new printing workshops opening in Wuqiang county in 1925. As late as 1936 several hundred types of nianhua could still be found at the market in the city of Baoding. Since this was within Wuqiang's market region, it can be assumed that Wuqiang was still actively producing a portion of this selection.

C) Yangliuqing

Of all the nianhua production centres in the north, the largest and most influential was Yangliuqing, a medium sized town (7,000 families at the turn of the century) located in the vicinity of Tianjin. Like other printing centres Yangliuqing was the centre of a more extensive printing operation which supported a cottage printing industry spread out over local villages. Located between the main production centres of Yangliuqing and Chaomidian were at least ten villages, each containing at least thirty workshops that varied in size from small family units, to firms having annual capital of 180,000 Yuan. Chaomidian was the largest nianhua producing village, having thirty printing workshops in 1900, and double that number by 1904. In 1927 Chaomidian had 151 families (80% of the population) involved in either printing or mounting pictures. Other large producers were Gufosi, where 145 families (60% of the population), were involved in printing, as were 105 families (40% of the population) in Zhouliwu. In 1927 a total of 6,000 individuals in Tianjin county were earning 40-60 Yuan/ annum processing prints.

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79 Ibid. p. 522.
80 Xie Zongtao 'Shuo Fangjian Nianhua' Hebei Yuekan 4(2), 1936, p.1. Prints in the collection of the Muban Foundation for the Propagation of Chinese Woodblock Printing and Prints show that Wang Shangyi was able to purchase Wuqiang door gods in Baoding in the 1920s or 1930s.
81 Jingji Banyue Kan 1(3) 1927, p. 31.
82 A Ying, Zhongguo Nianhua Fazhan Shilue 1954, p. 27.
Further afield, Yangliuqing subcontractors could be found in Weixian, and in Wuqiang where there were at least two workshops under contract from Yangliuqing. Their nomenclature, Delong and Yongzeng, suggest that these were in fact branches of Qijianlong and Dailianzeng respectively.84

Because of its proximity to Tianjin, Yangliuqing had a transportation and distribution advantage over its competitors. This included several river connections providing easy access to urban markets in Tianjin and Beijing, the Grand Canal, and later rail and sea links that gave Yangliuqing access to markets throughout the north, north-east, and north-west. For markets in Rehe, Chahar, Suiyuan, and Mongolia, prints were shipped in the second or third lunar month by boat to Dongfengtai, and then transferred to local markets in the northern provinces. To the west the prints were shipped by rail to Datong or Guihua (Hohhot), and then onward by rail and road to Shanxi, Shaanxi, Gansu, and Xinjiang. Because of the distance and relatively poor transport conditions, products for these regions had to be shipped in the second or third lunar month in order to reach the year-end market on time.85 Shanxi and Shaanxi especially had well developed nianhua industries in several centres, and it is a clear statement on regional disparity and trade inequities that these producers were not able to monopolize print in their natural markets.

83 Jingji Banyue Kan 1(3) 1927, p. 31. These numbers appear to contradict earlier evidence that large numbers of people were thrown out of work by the arrival of lithography. The numbers suggest that Chaomidian, a central producer, continued to be highly employed, while more remote villages like Zhouliwu suffered higher unemployment. The lack of statistics from pre-lithography era Zhouliwu, however, make this impossible to substantiate.

84 Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua 1996, p.344 The names of print workshops were often 'generational' in nature, with a junior or branch shop adopting part of the name from its senior operator. Thus nomenclature is a good indicator of evolutionary development.

85 Jingji Banyue Kan 1(3) 1927, p. 31.
D) Zhuxianzhen

Zhuxianzhen, in central Henan, presents a much different scenario than in the above examples. In Yangjiabu, Wuqiang, and Yangliuqing the shift to rail and coastal traffic was instrumental in improving the circulation of local products that originated in the new trade corridors. But this shift away from the older canal-based inland infrastructure had drastic consequences for those who were not compensated with rail connections.

Zhuxianzhen had been a prosperous trading town and handicraft production centre from as early as the Song dynasty when it served as the command post for the famed general Yue Fei. Strategically situated on the banks of the Gulu River, the town had a direct link to the Huai River and the Grand Canal, which then extended trade links throughout China's south-east. During the Qianlong era (1736-1795) the town hosted merchants from Shanxi, Shaanxi, Anhui, and Fujian who came to Zhuxianzhen to trade in silk, tea, millet, sugar, and paper goods brought from the south-east. Among the products sent back to the south were Zhuxianzhen fire crackers, dried tofu, wine, red-paper products, and Zhuxianzhen nianhua, which in the late Qing were under production in as many as three hundred workshops.86

This trade was disrupted in 1887 when the flooding Yellow River filled the Gulu River with silt. Due to the growing incompetence of the Qing government, and the growth of coastal shipping that drew merchants away from the interior, the waterway was never repaired. Continuous neglect and erosion brought most river traffic to a stop by 1900. The bypass of Zhuxianzhen by the Beijing-Hankou Railway in 1904, and the Tianjin-Pukou railway in 1912

86 Yue Fei yu Zhuxianzhen 1934, p. 126. While it does not appear that nianhua were printed on this red paper, red paper was used for duilian that accompanied, and sometimes replaced nianhua.
ensured that the once thriving transportation and commercial hub would become the agricultural backwater that it is today.

That nianhua printers from Zhuxianzhen were hurt by the loss of this waterway is testified to by an observer in 1934 who remarked that while nianhua and red paper were still under production, the number of paper shops had fallen to twenty, and nianhua workshops to around forty. With no transportation other than questionable roadways it is doubtful that local enterprises could have either obtained the large quantities of supplies needed for production, or reshipped the finished product, making it impossible to maintain the high levels of production seen in earlier times.\(^7\) So while production probably continued for local consumption, by the 1920s Zhuxianzhen nianhua likely disappeared from the south-east altogether, replaced by lithographic print from Shanghai or Suzhou. By the 1930s much of the remainder of the nianhua market had moved into urban Kaifeng where until the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War there were at most thirty workshops in the city.\(^8\) Several prints collected in the 1920s or 1930s by Wang Shangyi show that Zhuxianzhen prints, either from the original location, or from the Kaifeng branches, were being sold in Zhengzhou, Loyang, and Beijing at that time.\(^9\)

In light of these observations, the assumption that technology and infrastructural change had an immediate and deleterious effect on traditional industry needs to be revised. In each case where village print production centres were within reach of rail-lines or other reliable transport, the local industry realized dramatic growth. Only in the one centre which was bypassed by infrastructural change was there a negative impact. But it should not be assumed that the period

\(^7\) Yue Feiyu Zhuxianzhen 1934, p. 131.  
\(^8\) Liang Yuxiang 'Zhuxianzhen Muban Nianhua Kao' Meishu Shilun 1, 1987, p. 32.  
\(^9\) This information is based on my appraisal of prints and catalogues of prints held by the Muban Foundation for the Propagation of Chinese Woodblock Printing and Prints, UK.
of production growth in the eastern nianhua centres would be sustained. As will be shown in a later discussion, the same processes that temporarily benefited village print would undermine it in the long run.

2.3 Markets and Marketing

The first stage in the actual sale and marketing of nianhua took place in the village of production. All of the nianhua under discussion here were produced in small centres, (except for the later period when Zhuxianzhen nianhua moved into Kaifeng), the local market was naturally limited, and only a very small fraction of production was for local consumption. To get the product to market, therefore, each of the central nianhua producing villages became a wholesale market during the last weeks and months of the year. Chaomidian held an annual open market from the 10th to 12th lunar month at which local peddlers could obtain prints for resale in urban and rural New-Year markets. Yangjiabu, as we have seen, held its market in the village during the last months of the year, and within this period as many as 5,000 buyers would arrive to purchase bulk quantities for retail purposes. It is not surprising then that the Yangjiabu merchants should meet challenges from outsiders who marketed their product in nearby centres. Wuqiang does not appear to have employed the same protective measures as Yangjiabu, possibly because the absence of a guild allowed anyone to enter the marketplace in Wuqiang town where the sale of nianhua was concentrated. Tian Ling, observing the market in the 1940s, wrote that the marketplace in Wuqiang town opened in the eighth or ninth lunar month and continued until the eleventh month. The market at this time was so busy as to remind him of a temple fair.

90 Jingji Banyue Kan 1(3) 1927, p. 31.
91 Tian Ling 'Wuqiang Nianhua Ye Huifu Chushi' Jinchaji Ribao (Cengkan) #7 cited in Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua 1996, p. 4.
Given the volume of merchandise that was moved during this period, and from what we know of the geographic extent of the market, not all nianhua could be bought and sold in the place of production. To overcome this problem larger nianhua workshops established wholesale markets further afield. According to the Yangshi Jiapu (Yang Family Genealogy) Yangjiabu shipped nianhua to their wholesalers around Shandong, and as far off as Manchuria, Shanxi, Henan, Wuhan and Suzhou.\textsuperscript{92} To be more specific, after the Daoguang era the following workshops established wholesale enterprises across North China:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Name</th>
<th>Wholesaler</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yongxingcheng</td>
<td>Tancheng Zhuang 郯城庄</td>
<td>Tancheng, Shandong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongdaxun 東大順</td>
<td>Guandong Zhuang 關東庄</td>
<td>Dalian, Liaoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanxiasheng 南夏盛</td>
<td>Yingzhou Zhuang 莊州莊</td>
<td>Yingzhou, Hebei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guangxingcheng 廣興成</td>
<td>Yutai Zhuang 魁台庄</td>
<td>Yutai, Shandong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonghe 永和</td>
<td>Jiaozhou Zhuang 賈州莊</td>
<td>Jiaozhou, Shandong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dezhongfu 德增福</td>
<td>Xuzhou Zhuang 徐州莊</td>
<td>Xuzhou, Shandong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonghe 永和 and Beigongyi 北公義</td>
<td>Gaomi Zhuang 高密莊</td>
<td>Gaomi, Shandong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wansheng 萬盛</td>
<td>Rizhao Zhuang 日照庄</td>
<td>Rizhao, Shandong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Zhucheng Zhuang 諸城莊</td>
<td>Zhucheng, Shandong</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Zhouchun Zhuang 周村莊</td>
<td>Zhouchun, Shandong</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xindian Zhuang 辛店莊</td>
<td>Xindian, Shandong</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jinan Zhuang 濟南莊</td>
<td>Jinan, Shandong</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yexian Zhuang 裝縣莊</td>
<td>Yexian, Shandong</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yinan 沂南庄</td>
<td>Yinan, Shandong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{93} Table 1: wholesale outlets of the Yangjiabu nianhua industry.

According to Shenzhou Fengtu Ji (Shenzhou Local Conditions and Customs, 1900), Wuqiang shipped their product overland to Taiyuan, and via canal north to Tianjin and south to Xingtai, Cizhou, and Mingzhou. Products were also shipped to Henan and Shandong, and through Dongfengtai to Manchuria.\textsuperscript{94} Later research has found that wholesale markets for various Wuqiang workshops could be found in Tianjin, Tangshan and Dongfengtai, on several locations along the Grand Canal including Linqing, to the west in Datong, Taiyuan and Xi'an. Other

\textsuperscript{92} Cited in Zhang Dianying Yangjiabu Muban Nianhua 1990, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{93} Yangjiabu Cunzhi 1993, p. 216.
\textsuperscript{94} Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua 1996, p. 2.
wholesalers could be found in the established nianhua centres of LInfen, Shanxi, and Fengxiang, Shaanxi, a factor which accounts for similarities with Wuqiang prints.  

Yangliuqing material was initially designed for sale in urban areas, especially Beijing and Tianjin. But as urban markets declined under pressure from industrialized competitors they began to turn to rural markets and markets in smaller urban centres. To facilitate this, Yangliuqing used the services of Dongfengtai where printers and distributors produced and forwarded Yangliuqing material to points as far off as Harbin. It has already been mentioned that Yangliuqing printers marketed prints in Yangjiabu and Wuqiang. Still, the sale of rural nianhua in Beijing continued into the 1940s; one informant writes that every year in the twelfth month, people from the countryside come to sell nianhua in Beijing. These were not, the author adds, for sophisticated homes, but drama prints and subjects like 'fat pig comes to the door', 'Wealth Star', 'Monkey Stealing Straw-hats' which were enjoyed by 'children' and 'common households'.

For the retail end of the market several references show that 'paper horse' prints were sold through permanent retail shops which kept a large supply in stock. Prints were also known to be sold by itinerant priests or out of temples, as in Hunan where Day found the sale of religious prints under the monopoly of the temple priests. Doré also writes that "in all large towns, there may be found some ten or more shops engaged in making these superstitious prints (chih ma). Every province reckons at least a good thousand of such shops." Day and Doré focused their

95 Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua p. 344. See MacIntyre Chinese New Year Pictures 1997 for further information on Fengxiang.
96 The presence of Yangliuqing prints is suggested by a collection made there by a Russian visitor in 1913. While there is no direct evidence of Zhuxianzhen wholesale markets, by tracing its distribution route southward, it can be assumed that wholesale markets would have existed in major entrepots like Suzhou, or Hefei.
97 Dushi Congtan 1940a, pp. 58, in Beijing Difang Yanjiu Congkan 1969.
research on religious prints in the Jiangnan region, and so do not shed much light on how the secular *niànhua* were marketed in the north. Alexeev, however, remarks that in North China theatrical prints could be found year round in permanent shops, and that a wide range in quality was available.\(^{100}\)

To meet seasonal demand, many *niànhua* were retailed through peddlers and temporary 'mat-shed' shops set up in advance of the festive season. Concerning the market in Beijing Dun Lichen writes that "each year during the twelfth month mat-sheds (hua'er pengzi) are put up in busy parts of the city for the sale of prints. Women and children compete with each other in buying them, for these too serve to mark the yearly festivities".\(^{101}\) This observation is confirmed in graphic terms by the artist of *Beijing Fengsu Tupu (Pictures of Beijing Customs)* who depicts precisely this scene in his work of the previous century (fig.2.9).\(^{102}\) In addition, *niànhua* were carried by itinerant peddlers, although there is little documentary evidence to indicate the scale of the itinerant market. *Beiping Suishi Zhi (Annual Customs and Festivals in Beiping)* does note that in street stalls peddlers were known to shout "Selling *niànhua*, selling door-gods and strings of [paper] 'cash', selling condiments, selling pottery..."\(^{103}\) and it was not unusual to see children patrolling the streets with an arm-load of God of Wealth prints shouting out 'here comes the God of Wealth!'\(^{104}\) A foreign observer in 1920s Beijing wrote that in the 12th lunar month it was common to hear the call 'buy pictures' from a vendor who could supply "a sketch of an attractive

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101 Dun Lichen (Derk Bodde trans.) *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking* 1906a, p.100-101 Bodde notes that these represented scenes of "New Year rejoicing, God of Wealth, scenes from the state, etc." The Hua'er that Bodde mentions are paper effigies used in New Year sacrifices.
102 See Uchida Mishio *Beijing Fengsu Tupu* Vol.1, plate 18.
104 Ibid. p.161, this is also confirmed by Li Jiarui, *Beiping Fengsu Leizheng* 1937, p. 8, who notes that in Beijing 'poor children' would come to one's house to sell God of Wealth prints for 'a few coppers'.

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landscape or a likeness of some theatrical group and...pictures of fat babies! These are given in profusion by parents to a childless daughter-in-law, for it is believed that by hanging them on the walls of her bedroom at this season, she will undoubtedly be blessed with a son.”

These simple marketing techniques obscure the fact that selling nianhua could be an art in itself. As a purely oral tradition, early twentieth-century peddler's jingles are rare, but several of these have come down to the present through the memory of nianhua traders, and provide a sense of the retailer's art. Liu Minglun (1850s-1920s?) belonged to a well known artisan family of Yangjiabu, and was endowed with a full share of marketing expertise. Liu Minglun often followed his brother Liu Mingjie to Yantai and Manchuria where they sold their prints in the market places. There, Liu Minglun was known for his ability to spontaneously compose the doggerel verse known as shunkouliu to help sell the prints and, it can be assumed, to transmit the content and narrative of the prints to those who were unfamiliar with the forms, or could not read printed commentaries. The first sample is an advertisement for one of Yangjiabu's signature prints, 'Spirit Tiger':

Big Tiger, Little Tiger,
If you put them on your wall,
Adults keep their temper,
Children won't bawl.

Another auspicious picture of a well known icon, the 'shaking money tree', yaoqianshu was marketed with the following verse:

A shaking money tree in the home,
Filled with wealth, its bounds unknown,
Then one day the tree it shakes,

105 M.L.C Bogan Manchu Customs and Superstitions 1928 p. 2-3. Gamble mentions that in Ding Xian 'pictures of mothers holding sons' sold for fifty cents (Chinese silver dollar to US dollar exchange rate varied between $0.49 to $0.197) and up, see Gamble Ting Hsien 1954, p.53. Zhikang Shangpin Chenliu Suo 1913 notes a range of between 2-3 fen (cents) up to 3-4Y, or 3.4Y for large prints by the 100 and 1.25Y for small. Li Jiarui notes that 'Spring Ox' prints sold for 'two pieces of cash' Beiping Fengsu Zhi 1937, p.101.

Boundless wealth falls to earth,
Old and young, they gather it in,
Filling the money-bin to the brim.  

Several records from Shandong indicate that vendors of nianhua would set out their wares at designated points along the city wall, which they used to display their prints. A later Qing dynasty poet Bei Xingchuan once described the Weixian market as operating in conjunction with the kite market: 'The kite market is found at the eastern wall, many shoppers busily come and go, ... nianhua peddlers come from Yangliuqing... until cold-food festival shops sell kites.'

Bei's reference to Yangliuqing nianhua being sold on the street at Qingming festival is interesting in that it shows that Yangliuqing had infiltrated the market in Weifang, and that their prints were sold not only at New Year, but at other festive occasions. It also supports the earlier evidence that Yangjiabu prints were sold primarily out of the village, and only in the winter months. Thus Yangliuqing merchants, or their local agents and forgers, would have had open access to the market in Weixian city. There is, nonetheless, a strong seasonal nature to most nianhua that dictates their increased sales at the end of the lunar year. C.H. Plopper records one humorous proverb about a badly confused peddler that underlines the seasonal nature of door gods: "in fine weather he won't go out; in dull he hawks cold jelly about; in the sixth month felt hats he'd sell; and in the first Door Gods as well."
Attention to the production and marketing of *nianhua* demonstrates two factors in the North China social economy. First, by tracing the production and distribution of the product we gain insight into regional trade routes and the organization of the local handicraft industry. Since *nianhua* were among many handicrafts produced and marketed through similar processes, it becomes apparent that the North China village was integrated into an extensive regional and inter-regional economy. Second, handicrafts in general, but especially *nianhua* were not simple commodities; they were texts that carried complex cultural and social symbols, and when combined with a wider field of printed representation became a carrier of human relationships. Wherever they were produced, *nianhua* were formed by a wide variety of acquisitions and skills, including contractual relations, local regulation, mutual appropriation, and market competition. And as will be shown in the following, these influences extended to formal and informal Confucian teachings, religious authority, patriarchy and countless other structures, all of which were interdependencies brought together by the prescriptive society.
3) Home and Domesticity

The home was the principal gallery for most nianhua, and so had formative influence on the interpretation, theme, appearance, quantity, and even shape and size of the print, and so an analysis of the home is crucial to understanding nianhua print. But since nianhua are one of the most descriptive domestic texts, the reading of nianhua is also vital to understanding how the physical home was socially and culturally understood by its inhabitants. Nianhua and the home, therefore, must be understood as mutually involved in forming and giving expression to domestic experience.

Several excellent introductions to the Chinese household have become available in recent scholarship. The first is Klass Ruitenbeek's Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China (1993) - a translation and exposition on the carpenter's manual Lu Ban jing. Far beyond explaining how pieces of lumber and brick were joined together to build a house, this text shows that from the earliest survey of the land, to the hanging of the doors, the house was conceived as a ritual space. Building on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Francesca Bray's Technology and Gender (1997) has moved the discussion on Chinese domesticity to another level by examining how women's roles in society were determined by the technologies that they used and by the space in which they lived. Ronald Knapp's China's Living Houses (1999) has further contributed to the literature on the household, especially in the study of household furnishings and the organizing principles of feng shui. Each of these discussions demonstrates not only that the physical household conformed to architectural standards, but also that life lived within its walls conformed to the social and ritual standards of the community.
The study of *nianhua* will advance this understanding of the home by demonstrating how print was involved in configuring the domestic organizing principles of space, time, and social values. The spatial organization of the home into distinct rooms is qualified by assigning aesthetic and ritual values to each space. Temporal organization of work and social life into measurable units is done according to season, ritual, custom, and festival. And although spatial and temporal organization of domestic life are themselves systems of socialization and social control, more direct forms of ethical and political texts were present in the home as agents of social control. Each spatial, temporal, and social configuration is represented in some way by print, and print explains how people understood their environment through the narratives that were inscribed on the home.

3.1 The Spatial Configuration of the North China Home

From a physical perspective, the North China home was designed as a 'security zone' that established protective perimeters to maximize family comfort while guarding against environmental and social extremes. This 'security zone' extended to the spiritual world, maximizing the inflow of positive elements, and filtering out the extremes of negative omens and demons. The study of *nianhua* in conjunction with home construction and family ritual demonstrates that the family managed cosmic influences as aggressively as they managed their physical needs, and that these phenomena were frequently inter-related.

Most houses in rural North China, except the poorest hovels, consisted of a walled enclosure with at least one building divided into several rooms. Ideally, a southern exposure allowed the residents to take full advantage of the winter sun, and to maximize the inflow the

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111 Knapp gives some consideration to prints in *China's Living Houses* 1999, but includes little historical data.
positive yang element while conforming to a construction standard that extended throughout all social levels across the country. Directly inside the main gate was a protective partial wall hiding an outer yard containing out-buildings, animal pens, and granaries. At the back of this enclosure a second gate could lead to the inner courtyard, protected by yet another screen blocking direct access to the door of the main house. Where family resources permitted there could be side houses (xiang fang), containing a summer kitchen and sleeping chambers for hired workers or male family members in excess of the number who could be quartered in the main house. The largest family homes added to this one or more 'middle houses' for the second married son or other junior family members. A well might be the privilege of a higher income family (fig.3.1).

Nagao provides a floor-plan of a middle-class main house interior. This shows that directly inside the front door was a hall containing the stove, the family altar, and assorted furnishings. Doorways on either side gave access to rooms of equal size, one being the chamber of the head of the house, the other likely for grandparents. Each of the main rooms was furnished with chairs, dressing table, closet and an 'eight immortals' dining table (baxian zhuo), so called because it seated eight individuals. The dominant fixture in each side room was the heated brick sleeping platform (kang), fitted with cushions and low tables if they could be afforded, a straw mat and an old quilt if they could not. The south and occasionally the north wall of the house were broken by windows covered in oiled paper that were often decorated with bright red paper-cuttings ('window-flowers'-chuang hua). Adjoining the parent's room could be a bedroom

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112 In his Jia Li Zhu Xi recommends that "in organizing a room, no matter which direction it actually faces, treat the front as south, the rear as north, the left as east, and the right as west." So even where a house did not face south, it was still organized as if it were facing south. See Patricia Ebrey Chu Hsi's Family Rituals 1991, p. 8.

for unmarried daughters (*er fang*), containing similar furnishings. For a family with fewer resources, the main house had fewer rooms and furnishings, and more activity was concentrated in the remaining space. Although builders made optimal use of resources to respond to the environment, Yang described the typical North China farm house as cold, dark, and rank during the winter, and stiflingly hot during the summer.\(^{114}\)

In contrast to the mundane and functional physical orientation of the home, the spiritual orientation was a vibrant system of transcendent qualities assigned to various aspects of the structure and sacrificed to on a regular basis. This consecration of the home had been a part of domestic life since at least the Han dynasty, when references to state sanctioned home ritual could already be found in the *Book of Rites*, Book XX, paragraph, VII:

> The King, for all the people, appointed (seven altars for) the main sacrifices: - one to the superintendent of the lot; one in the central court, for the admission of light and the rain from the roofs; one at the gates of the city wall; one in the roads leading from the city; one for the discontented ghosts of kings who had died without posterity; one for the guardian of the door; and one for the guardian of the furnace ...other officers and the common people had one (altar and one) sacrifice. Some raised one altar for the guardian of the door; and others, one for the guardian of the furnace.\(^{115}\)

This early reference indicates that the last two sacrifices to the door and stove were considered to be the family responsibility. Liu Tong's *Dijing Jingwu Lue* indicates that in Ming dynasty Beijing the sacrifices had been extended to the 'well, stove, gate, door, and grinding wheel'.\(^{116}\) By the late Qing, as Dun Lichen indicates, the 'one or two' sacrifices had been extended to 'five sacrifices' to the gates, doors, front-room, stove and well/alley.\(^{117}\)

While the household sacrifices are formally described as inanimate, in practice each of these state sanctioned domestic rituals had developed associated cults devoted to the deities that

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\(^{114}\) Ibid, p. 40.  
\(^{117}\) Derk Bodde, note in Bodde (trans.) Dun Lichen *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking* 1906 (a), p. 4.
were thought to inhabit the home. As the home was the most personal environment, it was the place most deeply inscribed with personified cults that were attached to key sacrifices. Doré writes in the early twentieth century that there were six household deities, or 'tutelary gods of the house' jinjishen which belonged to the 'Ministry of Exorcism'. These included the generic household gods (jiatang); ancestral tablets muzu; Kitchen God (zao jun); Gate God (menshen); the exorcist Zhong Kui; and the male and female genii of the bed (chuang gong, chuang mu). Besides these household deities it was possible to use Jiang Ziya as an exorcist and to give the seat of honour to Guanyin, General Meng, the Five Sages and others.\footnote{Henri Doré Researches sur les superstitions en Chine V.4, 1911-1929, p. 417.} Other configurations of domestic gods are found in votive prints that assemble the core deities for sacrificial purposes. The first of these include the gods of the door, front gate, wealth, happiness, kitchen and medicine.\footnote{Wang Shucun Paper Joss 1992, no. 55.} Another includes the Civil and Martial Gods of Wealth but with Guanyin included out of respect to Buddhists. A third picture from Baoding includes the gods of kitchen, well, wealth, gate, earth, and Gou Liu, who is likely the god of the latrine (fig.3.2).

The selection of household gods thus varied from place to place, and from situation to situation, each household having a favoured sub-group determined by local custom and family precedent. But whatever the personal identity of the gods, they all share in being closely attached to a specific part of the household - some being synonymous with their station in the house, others being more abstract, but still having a distinct physical space in which their cult was centred, and where they were represented by their printed likenesses. Nianhua, therefore, are concrete textual evidence of how the spaces of the house were spiritually configured.
3.1.1 Heaven and Earth

In 1752 Zheng Banqiao (Zheng Xie, 1693-1765) was serving out his time as the magistrate of Weixian. To commemorate the completion of his renovation of the local City God temple he had the following comments inscribed in stone:

Azure above is Tian (Heaven); massive below is Di (Earth). Between, with ears, eyes, mouth, nostrils, arms and legs, able to speak and clothe himself, ceremonious and capable of observing the rites (li), is Ren (mankind). But does this imply that the azure Tian is also Ren, with ears, eyes, and nostrils. Since the Duke of Zhou [the most revered sage], it [i.e. Tian] has been called Shang Di [supreme ruler] and the vulgar have also called it Yu Huang [Jade Emperor] and have thereupon given it ears, eyes, mouth, nostrils, arms and legs, a crown with pendant ornaments, a jade sceptre, and a personal existence....They have given it a retinue of youthful officers and fierce generals as companions, and the people of the Empire following en masse the footsteps of their predecessors have also personified it....But Heaven, Earth, Sun, Moon...although deified, have no personal existence and should not be sacrificed to as if they had. Yet from the ancient times even the sages have all sacrificed to them as though they had a personal existence.¹²⁰

Inappropriate as Zheng believed the practice to be, the magistrate was reconciled to the fact that people consecrated their environment by giving all phenomena a 'personal existence' and adorning them with human features, ornaments, sceptres and retinues. And even though Zheng wrote these words over a century prior to the period under discussion here, the study of iconography proves his comments just as valid for late Qing/Republican China as they were for his own times.

In the twentieth century the personified cult of Heaven and Earth (Tiandi) was recorded by both Nagao and Day as very active and socially universal in north and south China. Several of Day's informants reported from their home districts in Zhejiang that the Tiandi print was believed to be the 'greatest paper god' and was used by people of high-rank who displayed it in a central position of the house. Among commoners the image of 'Father Heaven and Mother Earth' was

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posted in a small niche on the outside of the house, along with the image of the Jade Emperor, where they would receive sacrifices from the family on the first and fifteenth of every month.  

Nagao's investigation provides more details on the actual practice of the Heaven and Earth rituals in Fengtian, where he investigated a cross section of families including merchants, middle class, and poor families. In the first instance Nagao found that when conducting the sacrifices out-of-doors during the New Year festival, merchant families would either lay out the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth before a permanent niche on the side of the house, or erect an altar under the eaves facing the courtyard. These positions would then be labeled as 'Here is the seat of Heaven and Earth', or as the seat of the 'True Governors'. On these altars were laid formal sacrifices of rice cake, steamed buns, candles and paper money. In a simpler home the lack of an altar or a niche on the outside of the house could be compensated for by a printed paper reproduction, pasted to the outside of the house with an incense holder below, hanging paper (gua jian) above, and red paper couplets at the side. Nagao's sample of a couplet reads 'For the three geniuses of Heaven and Earth, at dawn and dusk a stick of incense'. These prints contained no figural images, and were intended to represent the shrine found in a wealthier home.

To this point the ritual and representation of Heaven and Earth appears to follow standard Mandarin customs, demonstrating that common people had a basic awareness of, and respect for the structural nature of regular sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, and were willing to sacrifice to them in their abstract form. The outward appearance would be deceptive if we did not consider

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122 Nagao Ryuzo Shina Minzokushi V.1, 1940-42, p. 46, fig. 20, 76.
123 Nagao Ryuzo Shina Minzokushi, Vol.1, 1940-42, fig. 48, 52. County annals from Zouping, Shandong, indicate that in an earlier period the 'scholar gentry' shidafu had 'family temples' jiamiao. But where no such facility was available people would simply use the front courtyard for their ritual observances. Zouping Xianzhi 1837, cited in Zhongguo Difang Zhi 1992, p.174.
how it was that people chose to 'fill in' the structure. This was done, as Zheng Banqiao commented, by personifying Heaven and Earth as the Jade Emperor and providing him with a supporting cast of all the gods of the Chinese pantheon.

The sacrifice to Heaven and Earth as a New Year ritual is shown in a print from Yangjiabu in which the God of Wealth sends wealth laden 'fat pigs' (a homophone of 'fat lord') to the household gate decorated with couplets reading 'One night connects two years, the five watches cross over two years.' On either side of the front gate are ke flag-poles indicating the status the family had earned when a member passed the imperial examinations and became a scholar-official. Inside lives a wealthy family, elders watch the festivities beside the altar to Heaven and Earth, while the younger generation lights firecrackers and fireworks. The inscription across the top reads "In the Twelfth Month (layue) prepare for New Year, get a nice picture, invite the door gods, buy couplets and green and crimson decorations, set up an altar, and one hundred gods come to celebrate the New Year" (fig.3.3).

While the supremacy of Heaven and Earth is clarified by the centrality of its 'throne', the nature of Heaven is most clearly stated by an adjunct ceremony referred to in the print's inscription as 'one hundred gods come to celebrate the New Year'. Bredon and Mitrophanow observed that in Beijing this ceremony was celebrated on the nineteenth day of the first moon when 'all the gods of heaven and earth' would gather in preparation to report to the Jade Emperor. Of central importance to this ceremony was the pantheon print which depicted as many of the gods as possible - technically one hundred, but usually a lesser number in fact.

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124 In the traditional time keeping system, the night was divided into five two hour periods, or watches - geng.
The pantheistic prints represent various configurations of tutelary spirits, hierarchically arranged for the convenience of sacrifice. These demonstrate concretely which 'sets' of deities were considered important enough to be included, and how they stood in relation to one another. Pantheon prints were available from all print centres included in this study, and came in two basic formats: 'One Hundred Gods' (Bai Shen, Bai Fen, Quan Shen) prints have been thoroughly analyzed by Pedersen, and so it will suffice to say that these large prints included thirty to forty gods of various affiliations, with central deities like the Jade Emperor, Buddha, Guanyin, and Guandi placed most prominently. These prints were intended strictly for the New Year sacrifice, and according to regional practice the print was wrapped around a wooden or sorghum stalk tablet, or simply folded into the shape of a spirit tablet. This would then be placed before an incense burner on the 'contacting gods table' (jieshen zhuo) in the courtyard. For indoor use a less populous depiction of 'Nine Buddha of Heaven and Earth' could be decorated with various 'honeyed offerings' (migong) and other snacks skewered on a wire and piled into a 'date mountain.' In Beijing it was customary to add a collection of paper effigies called 'flower offerings' (gong hua'er) which were stood on piles of fruit or meats to act as emissaries of good fortune.

Other versions of the pantheon were sacrificed to and/or installed in the niche or under the eaves of the house. These were simplified prints exhibiting a central spirit tablet inscribed with words to the effect of 'Heaven and Earth Rule the Ten Directions'. The central deity in this print is the Jade emperor, but he is accompanied by a representative selection of Daoist and Buddhist deities. For outdoor offerings it could also be folded in the shape of a tablet, but if used

128 Nagao Ryuzo Shina Minzokushi 1940-42, p. 76, fig.52.
129 Nagao gives a more complete description of these prints in Shina Minzokushi 1940-42, p. 77.
for a wall or niche it was pasted flat. These, according to Nagao, represented the gods of the
house and were worshipped on the first and fifteenth of the month, at the same time as the
generic household gods (also known as the 'Great Buddha' da fo ), and the Kitchen God.\textsuperscript{130} These
representations would garner continuing attention throughout the year and on all important
occasions, such as on weddings when they were worshipped by bride and groom.\textsuperscript{131}

Pantheons would frequently be accompanied by a set of 'paper horse' prints. These prints,
rough and simple compared to other nianhua, were kept year round in shops devoted to the sale
of paper gods to members of various social groups, occupations, and trades, each of which had its
own patron.\textsuperscript{132} 'Paper horse' were also available for every known malady and social occasion,
thereby multiplying their numbers many-fold. In addition to retail shops, individual 'paper-horse'
prints were to be found in markets, temples, shops and other venues. The sum total of these
images is impossible to calculate, and even educated observers like Dord could only say that the
varieties of 'paper horse' prints were "almost countless."
\textsuperscript{133} In the mid-1920s Clarence Day too
could only write that one particular shop stocked "a thousand or more" types of such prints.\textsuperscript{134}
Yet it should not be assumed that most people were more than vaguely aware of most of them
because many deities belonged to specific guilds, or were managed by ritual specialists who
apportioned the gods much as a physician managed a pharmacopoeia.

\textsuperscript{130} While 'fo' in strict terms refers to Buddha, in popular usage 'fo' could mean any important deity. Day
also notes that 'paper horse' sellers referred to their product as 'Bodhisattva' (pusa) even though most had no
Buddhist connections.

\textsuperscript{131} Nagao Ryuzo Shina Minzokushi 1940-42, pp. 73-81.

\textsuperscript{132} See appendix II for detailed chart of patron deities.

\textsuperscript{133} Henri Dore\textsuperscript{\textregistered} (Kennely trans.) Recherches sur les superstitions en Chine 1911-1938, vol.4, p. 427.

\textsuperscript{134} Clarence Day The China Journal vol.7, no 6, 1927 p.280. Because these authors have made extensive
surveys of the material it will not be necessary to give comprehensive treatment to this particular print form
here. In addition to Day and Dore comprehensive accounts of these prints can be found in Goodrich Peking
For the individual a more efficient means of dealing with the pantheon was to buy in bulk. A set of prints included in Nachbauer and Wang's 1927 album from Beijing contains forty monochrome prints rendered in rough outline and on course paper. Day notes that in Beijing devotees could buy a package of seventy-eight votive prints, with a cover sheet featuring the Jade Emperor and marked with the slogan "Faithfully Worship All Gods". Grube notes in his detailed observations of Beijing religious practices that the 'one hundred gods' was a literal number. These prints were not treated individually and, as the poor quality of the paper and design suggests, were intended to be incinerated as a package, thereby fulfilling common ritual demands quickly and cheaply.

The printed representations of Heaven and Earth (Jade Emperor) and its 'retinue' have several important implications for the spatial configuration of the home. While on some occasions the 'Nine Buddha of Heaven and Earth', or similar groupings of gods, were invited into the front hall during New Year, most of the 'one hundred gods' were respectfully left out in the courtyard. The main sacrifices to Heaven and Earth (the Jade Emperor) were conducted out of doors, and the permanent 'throne' of Heaven and Earth was also posted in an external niche or on an outside support overlooking the courtyard. This meant that the awesome power of these deities was conscripted for the overall protection of the house, and that they were positioned so that nothing spectral could enter or leave the house without their scrutiny, thus making them a key link in the spiritual defence of the home (fig.3.4, 3.5). At the same time, by positioning the Jade Emperor outside he could be kept at arm's length from the family, thereby allowing the household residents to avoid his gaze.

3.1.2 The Kitchen and the Kitchen God

While the Jade Emperor was isolated from the family, he was not without a representative in the home. The Kitchen God, also known as the 'Lord of the Family', the 'Overseer of Fate', and the 'Heavenly Spy', was the lowest ranking member of the heavenly bureaucracy, and technically subordinate to the Jade Emperor. There is little question, however, that qualitatively the Kitchen God was the central domestic deity. The 1833 County Annals of Shanghe, Shandong, state that of the five household observances, the worship of the Kitchen God was most important. This is supported by conventional wisdom instructing that even if the family could only buy one nianhua a year, that print must be the Kitchen God - a point which contradicts Dun's assertion below that of the five sacred spaces, the gate was the first.

Depending on the season and the class of home, the kitchen was located either in one of the side buildings in the courtyard, or in a corner of the front room where the stove was connected with the kang. The ritual of the stove began with the guidelines for its construction; the Lu Ban jing contains specific instructions, and according to one pamphlet from the 1920s the stove could not be placed directly behind the guest hall, it must not face the door of the bedroom, its opening must not face south or west, and it should be built on an auspicious day. The ritual space of the stove usually consisted of a simple low shelf above the stove, on which sacrificial items are placed. Above this was the 'palace' or 'throne' of the Kitchen God, which could have been an actual niche, but usually consisted only of a two dimensional structure conveniently included in the body of the print that was posted on the wall (fig.3.6).

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Robert Chard's study of the legends of the Kitchen God proves that there is no simple way to account for the folkloristic significance of the deity, there being dozens of different accounts of his origin. The Daoist classic *Huainan Zi (Book of the Prince Huainan)*, for example, claims the Kitchen God to be the spirit of the Emperor Yandi. Smith, writing of Shandong at the close of the 19th century, noted that the Kitchen God was believed to be Zhang Gong, who maintained peace and harmony in his household despite its being inhabited by nine generations of the family. The secret to Zhang's success was his shared civility that extended even to his hundred dogs who were known to wait patiently if any of their number was late for a meal. When the Emperor sent for the patriarch to learn his secret, Zhang called for a brush and repeatedly wrote 'forbearance' ren on a sheet of paper. It was due to his example that Zhang Gong was attributed to the household throne.\(^{138}\) It was also his 'forbearance' that earned Zhang a place in the *Shengyu Guangxun Jie (Amplified Instructions on the Sacred Edict)*, an important moral guide, as an 'illustration of unity.'\(^{139}\)

A more popular legend tells that the Kitchen God is Zhang Layue who cast off his virtuous wife Ding Xiangnu in favour of a prostitute. As a result of his loose morals and high living Zhang soon became destitute, wept himself blind and was forced to take up begging. On the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month the blind beggar unwittingly stumbled upon the house of his former wife. With no thought to his previous licentious behaviour the virtuous woman took him

\(^{138}\) Arthur Smith *Village Life in China* 1899, p. 27. Wang Shucun includes a Fengxiang print of this individual in *Paper Joss* and notes that the incident was supposed to have happened in the Tang dynasty reign of Gaozong (664-665). Wang *Paper Joss* 1992, p. 164. Chroniclers in Qingcheng, Shandong cite a popular verse concerning the Kitchen God: The Kitchen God is originally named Zhang, a bowl of rice and bowl of soup'. The compiler notes that he understood that the Kitchen God was the spirit of emperor Yandi, and that he did not know the origin of the name Zhang. *Qingcheng Xianzhi* 1935, cited in *Zhongguo Difang Zhi: Huadong Juan* 1992, p. 180. This applies also to the compiler of *Chiping Xianzhi* 1925, cited in *Zhongguo Difang Zhi: Huadong Juan* 1992, p. 312.

\(^{139}\) see F.W. Baller (trans.) *The Sacred Edict* 1892, p. 23.
in and fed him, but when Zhang finally realized who his benefactress was he was so taken with remorse that he took his own life either by dashing his brains out against the kitchen sink or incinerating himself in the stove. Thereafter Ding Xiangnu began to revere her husband by painting his image on the wall over the sink and offering sacrifices to him on the anniversary of his death. At some point Zhang was joined by his wife and both were reproduced on paper posters so that everyone could pay homage to them as protectors of the home and family. In some representations Zhang is joined by his prostitute friend as well.140 Day believed that this type of print was limited to North China, whereas the southern Kitchen God was always printed alone.141 Nachbauer, on the other hand, notes that in Beijing the Kitchen God and Wife print was for use in family kitchens, while the solitary Kitchen God was intended for restaurants and shops where men managed the kitchen.142

The ritual involving the Kitchen God print began with removing the poster from the wall on the twenty-third day of the twelfth lunar month and burning it in ritual. This observance was supposed to send the god on his annual New Year's journey to make his report on the comings and goings of the family to the supreme Jade Emperor in Heaven. As reflects a common view of the petty official, however, the Kitchen God appears as slightly corrupt or, as the writer Lu Xun would have it, slightly stupid, since on the evening before his dispatch to Heaven the family would take a bit of honey or a confection known as 'teeth sticking sweet' and smear it on the mouth of the Kitchen God.143 This might have been considered a bribe, but generally it was believed that with his mouth either stuck shut, or full of candy, the Kitchen God could only

140 for this version see Yu Hongwen Yangjiabu Muban Nianhua 1994, p. 7.
142 A. Nachbauer and Wang Les Images Populaires Chinois 1927, no pagination.
143 Reginald Johnston Lion and Dragon in Northern China 1910, p. 193. Johnston also noted that children could be the benefactors of this part of the ceremony by receiving the left-overs.
mumble forth his unintelligible report to the Jade Emperor and return home where the family has prepared a new 'throne' for him in the form of the new nianhua bearing his image. For the remainder of the year the Kitchen God would receive sacrifices on the first and fifteenth day of each month.

The rituals of the Kitchen God were complemented by numerous taboos attached to his image and the immediate space over which he presided. One of the most fundamental distinctions of the household comes from the phrase 'men don't worship the moon, women don't offer sacrifices to the Kitchen God.' But while this freed women from ritual responsibility, the social implications of locating the 'heavenly spy' in the woman's space could be severe. A scripture of the 1920s, for example, warned the household members that their every move was under surveillance and that on the stove one should never cook beef, dog or eels, spill pepper, warm the feet, brew medicine, or burn chicken feathers. Nor should one curse, sing, scold, use improper language, or sharpen a knife in the presence of the Kitchen God. One should also avoid placing tung oil on the stove; and given the combustible nature of tung oil, its presence on the list qualifies the breaking of other taboos as a serious matter. That women had the most to lose or gain from their conduct toward the Kitchen God is underlined in another passage which relates the case of one Tang Xuncun, who failed to prevent the women of his family from offending the god. As a result the mother of the family went mad, calling incessantly to the Kitchen God and dying a half year later. On the other hand another young woman who maintained proper respect for the Kitchen God was saved from an early death when the Kitchen God drove away a demon sent to take her life.

144 Li Loulou Zhongguo Minjian Chuantong Jieri 1992, p. 194.
The kitchen, therefore, was deeply inscribed by the presence of the Kitchen God, who, like the other household gods, was embodied in print, and the print functioned as the focal point of a distinct set of gendered social values that resided at the centre of the home. And whatever mythology was attached to the print, the physical presence of the print in the kitchens across the empire reified the universal cult that compelled the family to 'conduct itself with deportment'. The Kitchen God cult thus represented a moral structure in which men were almost universally entrusted with conducting the ritual observances by which the family could gain the favour, while women were made to bear the responsibility and consequences for moral failing.

3.1.3 Door Gods

A) Exterior Gates

In the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, an outside observer might have noticed that the ritualistic inscription of the home began at its outer extreme, with the double-leaf front gate on which was fixed a pair of Door Gods representing historical/legendary martial figures taken from the Chinese classics. Dun Lichen writes that legends surrounding Door Gods were strictly popular interpretation, and according to his learning false: "in reality these explanations are... false, and it is only correct to say of them that they are gate gods. In fact the gate is the chief of the five household things sacrificed to, and hence is not a heterodox deity. Thus when people of the Capital regard them as gods, but do not sacrifice to them, they have failed to grasp their significance."^146

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^146 Dun Lichen (Bodde trans.) *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking* 1906a, p. 100.
Although he does not elaborate on the correct 'significance' of the gods, as a trained scholar his understanding likely came from the Confucian classics. But the unstated significance of the Door Gods is alluded to in the following passage from the *Qinding Daqing Huidian Shili*:

On the 24th day of the 12th month the official is to arrange for the hanging of Door Gods and couplets. On the 2nd day of the 2nd month they are to be returned to storage. On the 30th day of the 4th month the official should arrange for the hanging of the 'five poisons' screen. On the 2nd day of the 6th month they are to be returned to storage. In the 25th year of the Kangxi reign the Duanwu customs were stopped. The practice was later resumed and it was suggested that the time for hanging Door Gods and couplets should be moved to the 26th day of the 12th month, and that they be returned to storage on the 3rd day of the second month. This met with approval.147

Two things are evident from this 'orthodox' account, first being that there is no reference to the narrative background of the Door Gods, and second that there is an overt emphasis on the precise timing of the setting up and taking away of the Door Gods and the 'five poison' screens. The intended 'significance' of the Door Gods is not contained in spiritual belief in any doctrine of the Door God, but in the precise ritual of their use and preparation.

In the village household, however, Door God rituals were far less developed than the mythological trappings of the deities. In practice it was necessary to place the Door Gods in the right order: "The Door Gods wrongly pasted, trouble to the right and to the left" as a popular *chengyu* advises.148 But this simple ritual requirement hardly compensates for the extensive corpus of lore, legend and religious belief surrounding them. One of the most commonly held beliefs is taken from the first century BC *Shanhaijing (Classic of the Mountains and Seas)*, which notes that the Door Gods 'Shen Tu and Yulei' originated as guardians of the celestial peaches of Tushushan:

In the vast ocean the mountain or land of Tu-shoh (Tusu) lies. A large peach tree stands in it, the foliage of which extends three thousand miles. The north-eastern side

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147 Li Hongzhang et.al., *Qinding Daqing Huidian Shili* 1899, p. 16687.
148 C.H.Plopper *Chinese Religion Seen through the Proverb* 1926, p. 185, #1097. *Chengyu* are four character phrases in the form of a parable.
of its branches is called the Gate of Spectres because it is there that the myriads of spectres go in and out. There were in that island two divine men, Shen-t'u and Yuj-lei (Yulei) by name, who direct the examination and management of the hosts of spectres. Spectres which caused evil and damage they fettered with ropes of reed or rushes, to give them as food to a tiger. Thereupon the Emperor Hwang (27th cent. B.C) instituted the ceremonial usage of driving off spectres at the proper season; that is to say, he set up large images of peach wood, painted Shentu and Yulei on gates and doors, and, together with a tiger, suspended there cords of reed, in order to repulse them.149

'Qin Qiong' and 'Yuchi Jingde' have equally classic origins, and were said to have served the Tang Emperor. *San Jiao Sou Shen Da Chuan* (volume VII) relates that after returning from a destructive military campaign in Korea, the Emperor Tai Zong (597-649 AD) was so plagued with ghosts and demons that he could not sleep at night. When he complained of this to his officials the two Generals Qin Qiong and Yuchi Jingde volunteered to don full battle armour and stand at the palace gates so as to frighten off the ghosts. This stratagem was so effective that the Emperor honoured the two by having their images posted on the palace doors (fig.3.7 a,b).150

In similar spirit of adopting traditions associated with mainstream Chinese culture, the seventeenth century *Feng Shen Yanyi* (*Enfeoffment of the Gods*) supplies the 'Tiger and Deer' Door Gods. The 'Ran Deng' (Lamp Lighting) Daoist' rides a sika deer with herb of immortality and is armed with magic beads. His opponent, Zhao Gongming rides a black tiger and wields the magical fulong rope, jinjiao shears, and dinghai pearl (fig. 3.8 a, b). The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* narrative contributes the great-great grandfather/grandson team 'Guan Yu and Guan Sheng', also known as the 'Broadsword Door Gods' for their choice of weapon, and the *Shanhaijing* contributes the legend of Shen Tu and Yu Lei to Door God lore (fig.3.9 a,b).151 The

150 While this has become one of the most popular interpretations of the Door Gods, the original Ming dynasty text of *Sanjiao soushen daquan* does not appear to have been well known until it was republished by Ye Dehui in 1909. Therefore it's function as a source of Qing dynasty Door God lore is doubtful.
151 Micheal Kardos mentions a number of other Door God figures, including Cao Bao and Yao Shaosi, Meng Liang and Jiao Zan, Mu Guiying, Ma Wu and Yao Qi, Wu Zixu and Zhao Yun, Yang Bo and Xu Yanzhao. See *Gods of the Gate, Protector of the Door* 1998. Wu Zixu and Zhao Yun occasionally appear in
common denominator and central components of all front gate Door Gods is trustworthiness, strength, and loyalty supported by a fierce martial countenance and impressive weaponry. Their posting at the most vulnerable point of an otherwise solidly enclosed court-yard situates them the front line of defence in the spiritual security of the home.

The image of the somber and dignified Door God had entered further into the vernacular in the seventeenth century when Mao Wei wrote a theatrical called 'Agitated Door Gods' (*Nao Menshen*). The story, which also provides insight into how household gods interacted, details an incident in which the old Door Gods refuse to yield the space to the new arrivals at the turn of the new year. The Kitchen God, Zhong Kui, the Goddess of the latrine, the Wealth Gods of the Five Roads, and the Twin Gods of Harmony try to intervene, to no avail. Finally the representatives of the Jade Emperor report the situation to their superior, who sends an Investigating Commissioner to resolve the problem and banish the old gods to Shamen Island off the coast of Shandong.\(^\text{152}\)

When Nagao was doing his research in the 1930s he found that in Manchuria Door Gods were used by commoner households, while those households having literate members tended to forgo the Door God in favour of a couplet, suggesting that by the 1930s some people had begun to view the Door God as vulgar.\(^\text{153}\) And so what may have most annoyed Dun Lichen two decades earlier was the fact that the Door Gods were not worshipped as derivatives of the orthodox deities of the palace, but as independent and widely celebrated heroes from history and mythology. Even though their interests indirectly supported the state, in strict terms these personified deities were mildly 'heterodox' for their departure from ritual standards. The

\(^{152}\) Zhuxianzhen print, however the others are little known in northern nianhua.  
Ibid. pp. 81-82. Less directly, the characters which are often associated with the door gods, i.e. Guandi, Yuchi Gong, and Zhao Gongming, make regular appearances on the stage in a wide variety of plays.  
\(^{153}\) Nagao Ryuzo *Shina Minzokushi* 1940-42, p. 448.
operative word here, however, is 'mild' since the gods were still basically structured by loyalty, and the genre appears never to have strayed toward any truly heterodox representations such as fox-fairies or sectarian religious figures.

B) Inner Doors

After passing through the outer gate and negotiating the spirit screen, often emblazoned with a large red 'fortune' (fu) character, the next obstacle was the 'second' door. The prints used on this entrance were often smaller than those used for the front gate, and incorporated certain cultural and civic heroes. In the interests of maintaining balance, not only do the secondary Door Gods appear in perfect internal balance, but the civility of the pair balances the martial nature of the Door Gods at the front gate. One common such Door God is Dou Yujun, a philanthropic poet who sired and educated the 'five dragons' of the Dou family. As told in the classical poem by Feng Tao (881-954) The Five Cassia's of the Dou House, Yi, Yan, Kan, Bei, and Xi, all attained honour by passing the Imperial civil service exams and receiving coveted jinshi (metropolitan) degrees, the highest degree available through the examination system.\(^\text{54}\) Other Door Gods include the 'Three Stars' of fortune, longevity and emolument (rank and salary), or the wealth and happiness summoning icons 'Tianguan grants fortune' (tianguan cifu) or 'Grow in wealth, gold and jewels (zhaocai jinbao). In each case, the civil gods supplement the basic security of the home with the basic requirements of learned cultivation.

Finally, an even smaller set of deities could be used for interior doors or secondary buildings. In the case where a household was home to a married woman who had not yet given birth, the bridal chamber would be decorated with fertility symbols such as 'Qilin Sends Sons'

\(^\text{54}\) Gan Tjiang-tek The Wonders of Man's Ingenuity 1962, p. 32. 'Plucking the top branch of the Cassia tree' was a metaphor for attaining the highest civil service examination degree.
(qilin songzi) or other depictions of honourable male children to ensure the birth and proper cultivation of any male heirs. Popular decorations for the chambers of family elders were various representations of longevity, the 'Twin Gods of Harmony' (hehe erxian), or the Goddess Magu.

A final use of deities and charms to protect doorways of home and business alike was during the Duanwu Festival and the 'evil fifth month', when all manner of negative forces were set loose in the world. According to Dun Lichen Beijing residents followed the following practices in order to protect themselves from disaster:

Every year at the time of the Duan Ying, shops have yellow streamers a foot long, covered with vermilion seal impressions, or perhaps painted with figures of the "Heavenly Master" or of Zhong Kui, or with the forms of the five poisonous creatures, which serve as charms. These are hung up and sold, and the people of the Capital compete with one another in buying them. They are pasted up on the second gate of one's house to ward off evil influences.155

Zhong Kui, the most formidable exorcist, began his rise to fame in the Song dynasty when his story was related in Shen Kua Mengxi Bitan (Jottings from Mengxi). The chronicle tells that during the reign of Kai Yuan (713-742 AD) the Emperor fell ill with an incurable fever. One evening the Emperor dreamt of a demon with a "snout like a calf, one foot shod, and the other bare, the other shoe hung down from its body, and in its girdle it had stuck a large fan of bamboo paper." This spectre had stolen some personal items of the Emperor and was running with them through the palace halls. Just then a giant dressed in a hat and gown of deep blue emerged and chased the demon down, gouged out its eyes and ate the demon on the spot. When the Emperor inquired as to his identity the demon eater replied that he was Zhong Kui of Zhongnan Mountain who after failing to attain an honourable military post vowed that he would continue to serve the Emperor in the afterlife by exterminating all spectral evil. Hearing this the Emperor awoke and soon recovered his health. Recognizing this as a good omen, the Emperor ordered the painter Wu

155 Dun Lichen (Bodde trans.) Annual Customs and Festivals In Peking 1906a, p. 44.
Daozi (d.792) to render a portrait of the demon to be posted as a deterrent against demons.\textsuperscript{156} Mengliang \textit{Lu (Record of the Splendors of the Eastern Capital)} notes that during the Song dynasty Zhong Kui posters had in fact become a common addition to households of the Capital.

The 'Heavenly Master' Zhang Tianshi, referred to by Dun, is the historical Daoist master Zhang Ling (34-156 AD, aka. Zhang Daoling). This priest founded a short-lived Daoist satrapy in Sichuan during the second century AD until being swallowed up by the expansionist Cao Cao. But despite his personal demise, Zhang's works carried on through his putative lineage as late as the twentieth century when his descendants continued to exercise their spiritual domain from their base in Jiangxi, before being disentitled under the Republic.\textsuperscript{157} The portrait of Zhang Tianshi, therefore, had an immediate connection both with the historical exorcist and his lineal descendants who performed services in the present. Zhang's portraits were especially in demand during the fifth month when they were needed to dispel the five poisons. Several of these yellow coloured exorcist prints are found in Nachbauer's 1927 collection, including one of Zhang Tianshi suppressing the poisonous toad with his heaven-sent sword. Another depicts the cosmic neutralization of the 'five poisons' represented by serpent, toad, centipede, salamander and scorpion (fig.3.10, 3.11).\textsuperscript{158}

In addition to their physical attributes, the doors were symbolically designed to protect the family at the outer perimeter, and to cultivate civility, peace and happiness in the inner

\textsuperscript{156} Jan J.M. DeGroot, \textit{The Religious System of China} (1892-1910) v.6 pp.1174-75. While deeply embedded in mythology, this story would seem to have a grain of historical fact to it as well; in 1072, during the Song dynasty an edict dealing with paint and print media calls for the reproduction of 5,000 copies of the Zhong Kui painting by Wu Daozi for distribution in the courts of the Western and Eastern capitals. (see Lust \textit{Chinese Popular Prints} 1996, p.27) Since Zhuxianzhen, near the Eastern Capital (Kaifeng) was already in business at that time, it is entirely possible that the \textit{nianhua} form could have picked up the Zhong Kui image as early as this.


\textsuperscript{158} J. J. M. DeGroot \textit{The Religious System of China} V.6, pp. 1182-85 Zhang Tianshi was not exclusively a door god, see Li Loulou \textit{Zhongguo Minjian Chuantong Jieri} 1992, p. 98 ,for a sample which actually instructs the user to post it in the sleeping chamber for good luck.
In a more fundamental aesthetic consideration, the form and positioning of the Door Gods represented the tendency to present things in the form of opposition, not just in terms of their binary nature, but in terms of the 'civil' and 'martial' balance between sets. In this respect the front-gate Door Gods, such as those that were popular in Yangliuqing, were often referred to as 'black face and white face Door Gods' in literal reference to their appearance, which in turn was a symbolic reference to their respective natures. Chinese analysts of nianhua tend to account for this in terms of the Chinese 'yin-yang' philosophy of keeping everything in oppositional balance, a principle that is virtually stated on certain door-gods labeled 'sun' and 'moon'. While it is difficult to substantiate this as being based on these principles, there is an obsession with balance in prints that will come up time and again in decoration and religious print.

3.1.4 Front Hall

A) Ancestors and the Paper Ancestral Shrine

Ebrey argues that in late imperial China the zong (patrilineal descent line) emphasised the ancestral cult, the agnatic group, accurate genealogies, and principles of descent or rank in determining seniority. The jia (home/family), meanwhile, was a unit of political economy and included non-agnates. Chow Kai-wing has provided further data on the propagation of ancestor ritual in late imperial China, largely through printed handbooks and manuals such as Zhu Xi's Jia Li (Family Rituals). Yet works of this nature were theoretical and do not indicate how the ancestral rituals were interpreted and practiced in the home. The most basic representation of the domestic ancestral cult was the functional 'ancestor print' issued by nianhua printers.

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159 This custom was also practiced in the Confucian Mansion at Qufu, giving it a high degree of legitimacy. See Zhang Yaoxuan et.al., 'Qufu Kongfu Menshen' Wenwu Cankao Ziliao 8, 1958, p. 50.
These prints illuminate the problem of how ancestral ritual was practiced, and demonstrate the significant gap between Confucian idealism and the idealism actually expressed in printed representations of ancestral rites in the home. The form, production, and circulation of ancestral prints are important to understanding the actual application of the rites in the family home, and how print ultimately shaped the conception of zong and jia.

This disparity between Confucian ritual and actual practice is best illustrated by comparing the theoretical configuration of the ancestral offering hall with the actual ancestral structure. In *Family Rituals* Zhu Xi was direct in his instructions concerning how the ancestral shrine should be constructed:

In setting up the offering hall use a room three jian wide. In front of the altars is the inner door and in front of it the two staircases, each with three steps. The one on the east is called the ceremonial stairs, the one on the west the western stairs. Depending on how much space is available, below the steps should be a covered area, large enough for all the family members to stand in rows. On the east there should be a closet for books, clothes, and sacrificial vessels inherited from the ancestors, and a spirit pantry. Have the wall go around them and add an outer door, which should normally be kept bolted.\(^{161}\)

While such halls were not unknown in North China, they were not used in the ways prescribed by Song and Qing Confucians. The most direct reason for this deficiency was the expense that made such extravagances beyond consideration for the average farm family in places like Wuqiang- the result being that in the early 20th century there were only two citang in that entire county.\(^{162}\) Poverty was most certainly the main factor in the failure to prepare proper ancestral facilities. Zhu Xi understood this problem and suggested various options for less elaborate ancestral halls that poor families could afford, but in North China many families would have been hard pressed to meet even these most basic requirements.\(^{163}\) Yet there was still a

\[\text{References:}\]

\(^{161}\) Patricia Ebrey *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals* 1991, p. 7.


\(^{163}\) Patricia Ebrey *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals* 1991, pp. 7-8.
fundamental need for some type of structure, since as the *Lu Ban jing* points out "a family temple is not like an ordinary house: whether or not sons or brothers will attain wisdom depends wholly on this place."\(^{164}\)

In Changle county, Shandong, those who had no ancestral facilities would join their neighbours in building a 'public' facility, which was still referred to as a 'family hall' where all the community members could observe the rites.\(^{165}\) But while no such statistics are available, it is safe to assume that the most common form of ancestral representation were prints and pictures produced by local artists and print makers. The 1936 County Annals from Dongping, Shandong, refers to prints and pictures literally as the 'paper family hall' (*zhi jiatang*), and that they were put up for New Year, and stored away after the fifteenth day of the first month.\(^{166}\) In addition to being cheap and easily stored, the 'paper family hall' could be taken along on trips away from home so that people could perform the rites even under extenuating circumstances.\(^{167}\)

Martin Yang gives due respect to the importance of family ancestors, explaining that the fortunes of the family were intimately connected with the satisfaction of the ancestors, which were represented by the ancestor picture. As integral members of the family the ancestors were to be included in family festivities, and especially during the New Year festival. Ancestral images were displayed on the last day of the year, the table was placed before it and set with "incense sticks, the burner in which the sticks are planted and burned, the candles and the two candle stands, a square piece of rice cake, a bowl of cooked millet with some dates on top of it, a peach tree branch planted in a jar with some copper coins hung on it, several bowls of vegetables and

165 Changle Xianzhi 1934, cited in Zhongguo Difang Zhi: Huadong Juan 1992, p.198. Linyi Xianzhi 1917 also notes that ancestral halls *zongci* were not common.
167 Nagao Ryuzo *Shina Minzokushi* 1940-42, p. 76.
platters covered with cakes. Once all these arrangements had been made the house was considered dignified, and family members were required to behave in a dignified and respectful manner. The following morning the family would rise, wash, dress in new (or clean) clothes, and pay homage before the picture or print. Male family members would light the candles and incense sticks, and kow-tow before the image of the ancestors. Given the location of Taitou in Jiaodong, the 'image' that Yang mentions was very likely one of those produced in the east-Shandong nianhua printing centres.

The use of the ancestral image was condemned by Zhu Xi because it could never accurately portray the individual. Nonetheless, it was a common practice across China, and we may recall that the Yangliuqing nianhua painter Gao Tongxuan had begun his career as a portrait painter - the majority of which, no doubt, were of the deceased. The mass produced image was even further from accurate portrayal, but it was still a viable option for those who could not afford to pay artists like Gao Tongxuan. One resident of Republican era Changyi (near Weixian), had the following recollection of using an ancestral picture (not necessarily a print) on New Year's eve, when the family would:

hang an ancestral picture in the centre of the wall in the central hall of the front room, (zhong tang), and an 'eight immortals' table was placed before it with chairs on either side...incense was placed on the table, along with candlesticks (2), flower vases (2), a flask of wine, wine cups (3), and an incense burner. These are the essential items every family needs for making ancestral sacrifices. In addition, it was our custom to have paper 'cash', a tin incense burner, two pieces of niangao (cake), ten steamed buns stuffed with dates, sweets, and a chicken, fish, and pig-head as 'three animal sacrifices'. These things we could not do without. (fig.3.12)

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169 The use of printed representations would, in all likelihood, not have been found in well off families which, even if they could not afford an actual hall, would at least have commissioned a painting.
170 Yu Kaijun 'Changyi Niansu Shandong Wenxian (12) 3, p. 22.
The detail of the ancestor prints contains much information about how the ancestral rites were pictured in Shandong during the late Qing and Republican era, and demonstrates that the wishes of the Confucian elite were seldom met in the home of the commoner. Fig 3.13 represents an elaborate ancestral hall, complete with lion guardians, several auxiliary halls and a well-appointed family, mostly males, gathered to pay respects. A photograph of a similar print in Johnson's introduction to Weihai proves that these images were in use in eastern Shandong in 1910.\textsuperscript{171} The image contains several key elements, including an altar before the image of the ancestors, ancestral tablets for the primary ancestors, and a raised position appropriate to the position of the ancestor. In addition, the blank spaces on either side of the ancestral hall are divided into even blocks representing ancestral tablets on which the names of other ancestors could be written. Nagao mentions that in cases where the names of remote ancestors were not known, or if the descendants could not write, the print was left blank.\textsuperscript{172} The three doorways correspond to the 'Triple Gate' recommended in \textit{Lu Ban jing} for construction of an ancestral hall.\textsuperscript{173} On the bottom left and right three servants bring shoulder poles laden with foodstuffs into the hall through side doors. Gathered around the front gate of the home the family members are accompanied by the trinity of the God of Longevity, God of Fortune and God of Emolument. Inside more children hold lanterns and light fire-crackers in the presence of the auspicious symbols of crane and deer.\textsuperscript{174} At the top of the print, past a large \textit{longevity} character, and the longevity icons of crane and deer, the ancestors sit behind a table filled with sacrificial items including the typical chicken, fish and pork head, cakes, incense, candles and incense burner.

\textsuperscript{171} R.F. Johnston \textit{Lion and Dragon in Northern China} 1910.
\textsuperscript{172} Nagao Ryuzo \textit{Shina Minzokushi}, 1940-42, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{173} Klass Ruitenbeek \textit{Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China} 1993, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{174} In addition to being associated with the Longevity star \textit{shou}, 'Deer and Crane' correspond to '\textit{lu} and \textit{he}', which in homophonic terms can be taken as '\textit{liu he}', or 'six directions', meaning the cosmos.
Although these pictures were far less expensive than the prescribed ancestral apparatus, their size and detail could still have made them too expensive for purchase by the poorest families. In this case the nianhua industry could provide a printed version that would cost no more than a few coppers. A print from Pingdu (fig.3.14) has a similar arrangement of prosperous family members gathered together with certain household gods to honour the ancestors. At the front gate the Door Gods Shentu and Yulei (recognizable by their choice of weapon-the mace) stand watch at the gate not as 'prints', but personified as 'actual' guards. Outside the gates the God of Wealth and God of Fortune are in attendance, and inside are the family members, including two women who supply cakes and accompany a young boy. On the opposite side are two well-dressed men, one an official holding a writing brush, who may be the God of Literature. The print extends back through a succession of halls, past the spirit tablets entitled 'throne of the ancient spirits' to the altars equipped with sacrificial paraphernalia presented to the ancestors, who wear a Qing mandarin hat and phoenix head-dress, indicating high status. As in the presentation of ancestor prints described elsewhere, their images are flanked by hanging pictures of flower vases. The central tablet reads 'Ancestors of Three Generations', which corresponds to the zong orientation of the Chinese family.

The inclusion in the print of family members and other honourable personages indicates that these prints were designed not simply for the family to reify the presence in the home of the ancestors, but to help the ancestors reify the presence of the living family. By depicting the family as part of high society, the family were able to symbolically escape a more humble appointment in life and present themselves in a position which brought sufficient honour to the ancestors.
Ancestral pictures were not left in place indefinitely, but were taken down and stored away after the first days of the New Year, only to be rolled out on special occasions such as Qingming. Thereafter other candidates for the position of honour in the front room are what Dore referred to as the 'generic household gods', or jiatang - literally 'family hall'. These include the trinity of Fortune, Emolument, Longevity, although Longevity could hold the place alone, as could the God of Wealth, Twin Gods of Harmony, Guanyin, Tianguan or exorcistic prints. Other secular prints for this position were available in the form of scenery, notable historical figures, or flower and bird scenes.  

From the combined physical and spiritual perspective the North China home was as much a ritual structure as it was a physical structure. And while both the physical and ritual attributes of the home conformed to regional and state standards, the 'structures' as Watson argues, were completed according to personal and local preference. And as Zheng Banqiao once commented, these preferences were guided by the desire to imbue environment and abstract ritual with personal qualities drawn from common experience. The domestic narrative, therefore, was a guide to physical and spiritual life.

3.2 Temporality

3.2.1 Calendars

Since temporal regulation has varied widely throughout history and among peoples, it is imperative that we problematize our own familiarity with time when conducting a socio-cultural survey of another society. And while we must also reject Tennyson's naive 'Cycle of Cathay',

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175 Martin Yang remarks that a Christian family in Taitou had replaced ancestral pictures with 'four scrolls of flowers and landscape' framed by Christian couplets. The candles were retained on the table, but the offerings were replaced with a bible. Martin Yang A Chinese Village: Taitou 1968, p. 93.
Chinese time-keeping must also be understood as more thoroughly cyclical than in the West. Basically, the Chinese lunar year is represented by the system of ten celestial branches and twelve terrestrial stems. This arrangement forms a sixty year cycle in which each year is assigned a different combination of one of twelve creatures of the zodiac and one of the five elements. The year itself is subdivided into twenty-four solar terms (jie) of fifteen or sixteen days in length, each having a title corresponding to meteorological phenomena or agricultural circumstance. In addition to the solar terms are the twelve lunar months of twenty-nine days (xiaoyue 'little month') or thirty days (dayue 'big month'). Except for the first month (zhengyue 'standard month') and twelfth month (layue), each month is known by its numerical order.

The significance of this form of calendar to our understanding of pre-modern Chinese society is summed up in the Balinese context by Clifford Geertz:

The most cognitive or intellectual of cultural systems—say, the Balinese calendars—are analyzed not (only) to lay bare a set of cognitive ordering principles, but (especially) to understand how the Balinese way of chopping up time stamps their sense of self, of social relations, and of conduct with a particular culturally distinctive flavour, an ethos.

Calendars and other temporal divisions have much less to do with how people make sense of their 'self' than they do with how people make sense of their time. But Geertz cannot be faulted for saying that the regulation of time is a fundamental 'cognitive ordering principle' for most people's lives, or that the management of time carries a distinctive ethos.

In China the lunar/solar calendar (nong li) had been standard from 104 BC until the fall of the imperial state in 1911, and it is no exaggeration to say that few political entities in history have understood the importance of controlling the passage of time better than the Chinese state. The first act of any new dynasty throughout history had been to proclaim a new era in its own

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name and to 'fix time' (shoushi/shiling) and 'regulate calendar' (zhili) as a key element of exerting legitimacy. Neither was the symbolic value of temporal regulation lost on Sun Yat-sen, whose first official act (defacto) after becoming President of the Republic of China on January 1, 1912 was to proclaim the year 'Minguo 1'- the first year of the Republic. Sun and the Guomindang (KMT), however, took temporal reform one stop further by rejecting several millennia of lunar time keeping and basing the new calendar on the Gregorian model.

Even though the calendar had been rectified by Verbiest in 1669 and set in advance to the year 2020, the imperial state still placed a great deal of importance on the ritualistic calculation and production of the calendar by the Board of Astronomy. To protect legitimacy the imperial state jealously guarded its right to print calendars, even reserving the option to execute anyone producing or distributing a calendar which did not bear the official seal. During the Qing the promulgation of the calendar was marked by solemn ceremonies held simultaneously in the capital and in the provinces on the new moon of the tenth lunar month. Bodde notes that the calendars would then be reproduced by provincial printers and distributed to every locality, and Dun Lichen adds that in the tenth month they were carried by "big and small book shops, while along the streets and lanes peddlers also carry them in boxes on their backs and shout their wares." In practice there was little potential for the Qing to obtain complete orthodoxy in these matters even at their peak of efficiency, and progressively less as they weakened in the 19th century. Responding to the inability of the state to completely supply the market, local printers

177 Richard Smith 'A Note on Qing Dynasty Calendars' Late Imperial China 9(1) 1988, p. 123.
178 Ibid. p. 126.
179 Dun Lichen (Bodde trans.) Annual Customs and Festivals In Peking (Bodde trans.) 1906a, p.76. Bodde notes that these were almanacs outlining propitious and inauspicious activities for each calendar day. He also notes that in 1936 the Nationalist government had tried unsuccessfully to prohibit their printing and sale.
moved in to fill demand by printing illegitimate copies of the state calendars, or else tailoring the material for local consumption. In doing so, private printers introduced variations into the form of the calendar. Many of these productions, as Smith points out, supplemented the calendrical calculations with graphic illustrations. Some of these had direct connections with the calendar, others illustrated popular themes with close links to nianhua iconography. One Hebei print, for example, is dated the second year of the Xuantong reign and includes the third and (inaccurately forecast) fourth year of the child emperor's term, cut short by the 1911 Xinhai Revolution. The calendar also includes a chart showing the conflicting elements of the zodiac that should be avoided, especially in marriage (fig.3.15). Other unofficial graphic additions to almanacs included the 'twenty four filial pieties' etc. and usually a picture of the 'spring ox', that will be discussed later.181 The calendar, therefore, is not a homogenous form, but a widely varied body of material that intersected with nianhua.

Plentiful as the state and pseudo-state calendars and almanacs were, the most ubiquitous time keeping device was that included in the Kitchen God print. Li Guangting, for example, noted that in rural North China of the 1850s the state almanac was far less popular than the Kitchen God for keeping track of the year:

After the new calendar has been proclaimed in the first month of winter, the runners of the district Yamen try to distribute the almanac everywhere, aiming at a free meal. But the village households are used to bringing their offerings to a printed image of the hearth god, on which is indicated, at the top, the solar terms and whether the months are 29 or 30 days long. They don't need to consult a book. While the Yamen runners insist on handing out a copy, the villagers are determined not to accept it. The runners say 'It is really better to have a copy. In this world there are hardly any households that do not fall apart. If by chance your family splits up and the picture of the hearth god is torn to pieces, then it is too late for you to start searching for your almanac.'182

181 Richard Smith 'A Note on Qing Dynasty Calendars' Late Imperial China 9 (1) 1988, p. 128.
As Francesca Bray discusses in Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* there is some debate on whether the calendar was absolutely essential to agricultural production since peasants had their own methods of interpreting the environment, such as taking the flowering of certain plants in spring as a signal to start planting. But while natural phenomena are vital signs, any experienced farmer would know over-reliance on them to be a dangerously inaccurate practice. This was especially so in the north where the growing season is limited by the last frosts of spring and the first frosts of autumn, and cropping is carefully timed to fall within that window of opportunity, and so the importance of the calendar to agricultural production cannot be overlooked.

The common calendar, most often included with the Kitchen God, represents a complex understanding of nature and time. According to one such calendar from 1904 (fig.3.16), anyone with even basic literacy could determine that when the Xi Shen (star/planet of the God of Joy) was in the south-east, nine oxen will plow the fields, and when the Cai Shen (star/planet of the God of Wealth) was positioned due-south, twelve dragons control the waters. The combination of phrases predicts a plentiful harvest, since in Chinese cosmology, nine oxen are the maximum that may plow the fields, while twelve dragons are the maximum for controlling the waters. 183 Further instructions indicate an as-yet undeciphered reference to the stems and branches that will occur when Gui Shen (star/planet of the God of Rank) is in the south-east, and when Taisui

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182 Li Guangting *Xiangyan Jieyi* ca 1850, translated by Ruitenbeek *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China*, 1993, p.41. Note that this also seems to refer to the concept of 'splitting up the family' which is synonymous with 'splitting the stove.' Presumably if the family split up they could not both take possession of the stove, nor the stove god. In Beijing both Boden and Li Jiarui write that in the 1920s and 30s almanacs, here known as *huang li* (yellow calendars) were the norm. Li refers to the *Niu'er Mang'er Guonian de Xiao Huangli* -'Spring Ox and Jumang Almanac of the New Year'. Li also indicates that this was something bought outright, not forced upon people by petty officials. He also cites the late Qing *Yi Sui Huo Sheng*, which noted "Spring Ox pictures, two pieces of cash each, are bought from the tenth month onward, it is absolutely necessary to buy one for the 'beating of spring'. Li Jiarui *Beiping Fengsu Leizheng*, 1937, p. 6.

(Jupiter, Governor of the Celestial Ministry of Time) was due-east there would be five days of hardship.\textsuperscript{184} This information was crucial to passing the year in auspicious form since, as Dun Lichen writes: "On the occasion when one first leaves the house (on New Year's morning) one should bid welcome to the God of Joy and Bow to him."\textsuperscript{185} The priority of the various blessings must have depended on local custom since Li Jiarui cites a reference to walking instead in direction of the 'God of Wealth' for one hundred paces.\textsuperscript{186} In addition to the Star Gods are the numerous icons appended in the body of the print, chiefly the Kitchen God, but also the God of Wealth and his immortal attendants. While missing from this example, many other Kitchen God prints contain the Eight Immortals. The calendar also includes references to sacrificial rites, and their purpose in facilitating the co-operation of said deities. The calendar completes the circle through direct connection with the family, which is often depicted in the print. This carries the function of defining the relationship humans have with the calendrical calculations and the various natural and supernatural universal phenomena. Finally, the calendar outlined what type of weather to expect at certain stages in the year, and what agricultural activities should be undertaken at specific times. All of these physical phenomena are then linked to the supernatural in the form of dragons and pearl, indicating the wish for balance and harmony in nature.

A consideration of the context of the calendar also demonstrates that it was also one of the most political representations to be found in the common household. In most calendar prints the celestial branches and terrestrial stems are omitted and replaced with the year of the reign - two Yangliuqing prints, for example, are dated Guangxu 26 (1901) and Guangxu 29.

\textsuperscript{184} Taisui was the God of the Year, some 'Spring Ox' rites were carried out at this temple where it was available.
\textsuperscript{185} Dun Lichen (Bodde trans.) Annual Customs and Festivals In Peking 1906a p.105. Also see Li Jiarui Beiping Fengsu Leizheng 1937, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{186} Li Jiarui Beiping Fengsu Leizheng 1937, p. 8.
And although the lunar calculations had been proscribed by the Republican government, early Republican calendars persist in the traditional format, although they recognized the political authority of the Republic's Minguo as the patron of the calendar.

The long-term failure of the state to achieve temporal regulation, however, is reflected in a calendar print from 1931 preserved in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, which still used only the lunar/solar calculations, but replaced the Star Gods with the information: 'Two dragons control the waters/ Nine days of hardship,' probably indicating a less than ideal harvest. Dittrich includes a print from the same year which has similar form, the same inscription, and the same calendar. It is possible that the absence of Star Gods reflects Republican government progress in eliminating such references, or that by 1931 printers and their clients were voluntarily accepting the absence of stellar deities. At the same time, however, there was no problem with accepting the divine status of the Kitchen God, or the fact that the attending officials are in the employ of the 'heir to the throne' (fig.3.17, 3.18). Other Kitchen God Calendars from 1937, 1940, and 1947 revert to the Star God form and perpetuate the traditional calendar, indicating that there were few lasting effects of Republican calendar reform.\textsuperscript{188}

Since calendar printers were likely not capable of calculating the calendar themselves, they necessarily received the information from an authoritative source. In imperial times this may have come from the state almanac that was distributed to the villages by Yamen runners in the tenth month, thus giving village printers sufficient time to include the calendar in Kitchen God prints for distribution in the twelfth month. But 'Spring Ox', and 'Spring Ox and Jumang' prints,

sometimes containing calendars three or even six years in advance, were issued at the same time as the government almanac. Therefore calendar printers had access to, and understanding of, other forms of calendrical calculation, most likely the cyclical 'Ten Thousand Year' almanacs.

A common supplement to the lunar calendar were notational devices used to count the number of days until warm weather could be expected to return. These prints refer to '9-9', or the passing of the eighty-one days from the twenty-second solar term (Winter Solstice, eleventh lunar month) until the accepted arrival of spring. The typical chart is composed of nine sets of nine circles making a total of eighty-one circles. Beginning with the winter solstice, part of one circle is filled in on each day. If cloudy weather then the top should be marked, and if clear the mark should be on the bottom, if wind then on the left, right for rain, and the centre for snow. The purpose was to be able, at the end of the eighty-one days, to make a prediction of the weather for the coming agricultural year based on winter weather patterns. The graphic nature of the chart assisted the illiterate in tracking the passage of time.

The more poetic of these charts depict a branch of plum blossoms which, due to its early emergence, is considered a harbinger of spring. Issued in simple outline, the branch holds exactly eighty-one petals, each corresponding to one of the eighty-one days until spring. To pass the time until planting season, the farmer could colour in each leaf with red ink (in the pattern described above) until the branch was filled with plum blossoms and spring would hopefully have arrived. More literate weather watchers could replace the pictures with a nine word poem, each word of which was composed of nine strokes- in translation "Before the hall droop the willows; The luxuriant herbage awaits the winds of spring."  

\[189\] See Chunming Cai Feng Zhi cited in Li Jiariu Beiping Fengsu Leizheng 1937 p101. Boden also mentions that it was unusual for a home in Beijing (or Beiping) to be without a Huang Li almanac. \[190\] E.T. Williams 'Agricultural Rites in the Religion of Old China' JNCBRAS 66, 1936, p. 49.
Nianhua were also used to help differentiate the seasons in an aesthetic sense, with numerous prints depicting the rebirth and fertility of spring, such as 'ten boisterous boys', 'spring for both deer and crane', and 'three goats welcome the spring'. Most vivid are those which assign flower and bird symbols to each of the seasons- the peony was the first to arrive in spring, the lotus in summer, the chrysanthemum for fall, and the hardy plum for winter. The abundance of these prints throughout North China reinforced the association of seasons with their attendant flowers and birds, whether or not the specific flowers or birds were seen in the village.

3.2.2 Pictures of the Spring Ox

As with the timing of the New Year, one of the key functions of the calendar was to encode and regulate ritual. For the agricultural community and the agrarian state alike, one of the most important dates in the calendar was the 'Beginning of Spring' (Lichun), and its attendant ritual, the Beating of Spring ceremony. Dun Lichen describes the ritual in Beijing in the following terms:

The 'Beating of Spring' is the same as the Beginning of Spring (Li Chun), and usually occurs during the first month. One day preceding the Beginning of Spring, the officials of the Metropolitan Prefecture (the government organ which had jurisdiction over the capital) proceed one li outside Tung Chih Men to the Spring Enclosure to welcome in the spring. At the Beginning of Spring the Ministry of Rites presents to the Emperor of the Spring Hill Throne (chun shan pao zuo) and the Metropolitan Prefecture presents an effigy of a Spring Ox (Chun niu). On the conclusion of the ceremony they return to their offices, leading the Spring Ox along and beating it, this being called the "Beating of the Spring".

A painting from Guangxu era by Huang Ruigu (1866-1938) of Sichuan gives a detailed introduction to the ceremonies celebrated in that province. While this is geographically removed...
from the region of investigation, it reflects descriptions from Beijing and Shandong, and since this was an event sponsored by the state, the observances were relatively standard across the country. The painting depicts a procession of the magistrate, his retainers, and imperial attendants on their way to the temple of agriculture where they would announce the arrival of spring and offer sacrifices to the figure of the spring ox and Mang Shen. Once the sacrifices were completed the procession would continue around the city in the company of the Spring Ox and amid xiqu, lion dancers and dragon lanterns. The final act of the procession was to whip the Spring Ox until it split open and spilled out smaller ox figures and grain, implying that there would be a rich harvest.193

Weig confirms this with his observations from Shandong, but adds that in local ceremonies, when the magistrate left the Yamen he was met by a mounted messenger whose duty was to report three times that the magistrate would obtain much happiness and promotion in the coming year. In the company of representatives from the various occupations, each bearing the tools of their trade, the magistrate would then proceed to the outskirts of the city where a large feast was prepared for the Spring Ox. There the magistrate and other mandarins would kow-tow before the effigy. The destruction of the ox (contrary to the above interpretation) was intended to guard against contagion, especially typhoid, which came with spring. On this day farmers watched the weather carefully, since a clear day would indicate a good year to come, while rain would suggest a poor crop.194

193 see Mianzhu Nianhua 1990.
194 Weig Chinese Calendar of Festivals 1929, pp. 8-10. Another references from Ningjin, Shandong, indicates that green forecast contagion and spring drought, yellow indicated sui nian (bountiful harvest?), black indicated strong winds. If on lichun there was snow the summer and fall would be dry, if a northwest wind rice would be expensive, if a south-east wind it would be generally dry. Ningjin Xianzhi 1901. Cited in Zhongguo Difangzhi: Huadong Juan 1992, vol.1, p. 149. Other citations register further variations in the colour scheme, suggesting that while the ceremony was widely recognized, the details were interpreted locally. See Laiyang Xianzhi 1935, cited in Zhongguo Difang Zhi: Huadong Juan 1992, p. 244.
The annual performance of the ritual by every county magistrate on an annual basis, and the inclusion of various farmers and trades-people in the ceremonies made it among the most public of the state rituals. This was also the most immediate and accessible for the farming population, and one of the few state rituals for which there are popular graphic representations. The content of the ceremony, moreover, was designed to have a favourable impact on the agricultural population, and served as a reminder to farmers of the necessity to prepare for spring planting. But while the spring rituals were open to the public, it is still unlikely that more than a few representatives of each village were actually present, the ritual being represented for most in print. Qing Jialu notes that

the 'old one hundred names' buy pictures of Mangshen and the Spring Ox to decorate their front room. This is of benefit to farming. As Cai Yunwu writes, 'the beginning of spring comes with the sixth nine (52nd day after autumn equinox), wonderful new flowers clothe the spring, making its colours more beautiful. Remember the role of Mang Shen clearly, all our desires are to have rooms lined with golden grain, a good harvest depends on beating the spring ox.'

The pictures which the author writes about could have followed any of a number of variations on the theme. One early 20th century print from Yangliuqing (Hermitage collection) depicts a district official sitting under a parasol overseeing the lichun observances (fig. 3.19). The official is accompanied by lower officials, and Jumang (a.k.a. Mangshang or Yaoma) holding the stick used to beat the ox. The print is filled with symbols and phrases used to greet the spring, and includes not only a spring ox, but a spring elephant - included because its name, daxiang, is a homophone to 'great auspiciousness'. The calendar is from the thirty first year of the Guangxu era (1906), and indicates the weather and the position of benign deities, while the inscription expresses a wish for harmony and abundance:

Winter departs, and spring arrives,

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195 Qing Jia Lu vol. 1 no pagination.
The air is warm and everything is in renewal and harmony, Scholars, farmers, artisans and merchants celebrate one hundred auspicious things, Five grains are in abundance, sing a song of peace.

A spring ox print from Yangjiabu (fig. 3.20) includes spring plum blossoms in the upper right. The ox is driven by Jumang the tree spirit, from above the Happiness Star sends blessings, and the mare has given birth to twin foals - a propitious event for the farmer. The hoe resembles the character for the Celestial Stem of ding, and cake (eaten by the children) is a homophone for the Celestial Stem of bing. The combination of these characters refers to the third and fourth day of the first lunar month which are the early days of spring. In the lower left an itinerant agricultural labourer is being pulled to and fro by foremen offering good food and money, an indication that even the landless will enjoy a profitable year. The inscription reads as follows:

The Happiness Star, in spring he arrives, prosperity surely will brighten your lives, Farmers will have a most bountiful crop, merchants, your profits will rise to the top, Step outside, good luck all around, for those who do business, great fortune is found, For households there's plenty of good times in store, disaster will certainly pass by your door. Officials, your blessings are seen everywhere, your sons and your grandsons 'attain the gold stair'. If any of you, the star you should meet, riches and honour piled at your feet.

As the print indicates, the arrival of spring is synonymous with the appearance of certain celestial and natural phenomena. Johnson, writing of Weihai in 1910, notes that the effigies of ox and spirit were decorated according to what the state almanac and other references revealed was in store for the weather - if the ox was painted yellow the summer would be hot, if green then there would be sickness in spring, if red there would be drought, if black there would be much rain, and if white then high winds and storms. If Mang Shen wore a hat and no shoes the year would be dry, and if no hat and shoes there would be rain, heavy clothes signal great heat, light dress cold weather, red belt foretells sickness and disease, white belt for health. All of these

198 To attain 'The Gold Stair' refers to obtaining office.
conventions are directly contrary to human practice, but within the norm for the spirit world. (Johnson adds that the term 'little Mang Shen' was applied to naughty children.) In addition, on years in which spring officially began in the twelfth lunar month, Jumang would appear in front of the ox to indicate the early arrival of warm weather, where as if he appeared behind, the spring would be late. The absence of one of Ju Mang's shoes indicates that there will be a bumper crop in the coming year.

Because it was strictly an imperial obligation, the Spring Ox custom came to an end with the fall of the Qing dynasty. There were several attempts to revive the festival in the Republican era, including the formal reinstatement of the 'Spring Ground-breaking (lichun) Festival' by the Ministry of Industry in 1935, and the proclamation in Sichuan of lichun as 'Farmers Festival' in 1939. If such ceremonies were conducted by local governments, they were sporadic at best. But in contrast to the decline of the festival, there is ample evidence that the circulation of 'Spring Ox' prints continued well after the decline of its attendant ceremony. Nachbauer's inclusion of a 'Spring Ox and Elephant' picture acquired at Beijing (fig.3.21), for example, proves that the pictures still circulated in 1926, and a review of twentieth century almanacs proves that the Spring Ox continued to be used as a time keeping device even into the present. The symbolism of the event, therefore, had grown well beyond its connection with the event itself, so that its decline did not result in a serious symbolic disjuncture with print culture.

The way in which people organized and regulated their immediate time and space involved both aesthetic and ritual qualities that were structured by a wide range of

201 John Weig *Chinese Calendar of Festivals* 1929, p. 8.
202 Chen Guofa *Guomin Shenghuo Li* (vol.1) 1945, p. 72.
considerations. But the evidence from *nianhua* suggests that first among these were the ritual structures propagated by the Confucian and agricultural state in the form of domestic cult structures and seasonal agricultural rituals that stressed the patronage of the state. But, as proven by *nianhua*, the state could not extend an orthodox interpretation of these structures into every household of the realm. Using Watson's reasoning, this might suggest that the state was relying on local printers to help 'superscribe' local society by extending certain forms into the *nianhua* market, and from there into the home. However, it is unlikely that there was any conscious action on the part of the state to achieve these measures. It was, rather, the limitations of the state which allowed local print to develop its parochial interpretation of the social world and to reproduce it as a vernacular understanding of time and space. This understanding was based in part on the dignity of the state institution, but heavily imbued with the propitiousness of religious symbolism and practical needs which the state could not fulfill.
4) Class, Narrative, and Ritual

4.1 State and Society: 'the meaning of the Emperor'

The people produced by high heaven cannot all be alike. Some are intelligent, others are stupid (hutu); some are vigorous, others are weak, but to each and all, high heaven has given means of support. Consequently each one should, according to his position in life and capacity, seek an occupation and settle down to it. It may be to study, it may be farming, it may be learning a trade, or keeping a shop, or soldiering. To study and practice from childhood to manhood, gradually renders each expert in his own sphere; he succeeds in life, and invariably becomes useful in the world. This is spoken of as "One's Proper Calling." ²⁰³

This chapter investigates how the inter-related effects of narrative and ritual were propagated as forms of social control in the late Qing, and as residual forms of local control into the Republican era. Chow Kai-wing has argued that in a departure from the didacticism of the Ming, Qing Confucians believed that custom and ritual could function as non-egalitarian methods of achieving social order. Evidence of Chow's thesis can be found in a wide range of Qing dynasty publications concerned with ritual, including fengsu (customs) books, and fengsu sections in 19th century county gazetteers. ²⁰⁴ But perhaps the clearest invocation of the role that ritual and custom played in society is stated in that most fundamental of government treatises, the Sacred Edict. The Sacred Edict, cited above, was originally issued at the beginning of the Qing dynasty, but was expanded first by Kangxi (r.1662-1722), and then by Yongzheng (r.1723-1735), who released it as the 'Amplified Instructions' on the Sacred Edict. In the final version, according to the 'meaning of the Emperor', 'customs' (fengsu) should be understood as the differences across the land in speech, actions and character which are the result of feng ('climatic influences' or 'the breath of nature'). There is no 'fixed rule' about regional preference for various activities, being only known as su ('common preference'). Thus, as the edict implies, it was not the intention of

²⁰³ F.W. Baller (trans.) Sacred Edict 1892, p. 110.
²⁰⁴ On the late-Qing see Chow Kai-wing The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China 1994, p. 86.
the state to seek absolute homogeneity in custom, but to 'renovate them, and reduce them to
order.'205

A second form of social control that is less obvious, but was capable of both carrying and
confusing moral messages is narrative. The full scope of narrative in China, and the subtle forms
in which it carries the interests of power and manipulation are far too extensive for full
consideration here. But because the fundamental stateist 'moral narrative' had to be understood by
all, and was repeated ad nauseum to this effect, it is relatively easy to discern. In reference to the
Sacred Edict the story runs something like this: the emperor is the patron of an agricultural state
in which the most honourable occupation, next to scholarship, is farming; women of all classes
should occupy their time in the production of textiles and the care and nurturing of children;
other classes should stick to their occupation so as to retain social harmony that would only be
upset by social mobility and the desire for great wealth. As the only form of print media capable
of carrying these ideals to the furthest reaches of society beyond the village into the individual
household, nianhua are also the only form of reference which can tell us how successful the state
was in establishing these ideals.

4.2 Scholar, Farmer, Artisan, Merchant

The concept of society being neatly divided into 'four classes' of people had been
propagated in China since about the fourth century and had at times been backed with sumptuary
regulation. Legal discrimination was relaxed in the Song dynasty, although as theory the
distinction continued to be refined as in Wang Chen's classic Nong Shu (Treatise on Agriculture)
where it is written that "the [scholar] gentry (shi) elaborate the rules of human relations (ren and

205 See F.W. Baller (trans.) The Sacred Edict 1892, pp. 99-100.
the farmers produce clothing and food; the craftsmen make implements; and the merchants distribute the goods." In the Qing dynasty many of the Song standards were revived as the Manchus sought to position themselves as the heirs to the perceived 'golden age' of Chinese history. Most notably the *Treatise on Agriculture*, most closely associated with settled agricultural life, and with its clearly delineated class and gender ideals, and wood-cut 'Pictures of Ploughing and Weaving', was reissued with a foreword written in the calligraphy of the Kangxi emperor, and again by the Yongzheng emperor, Qianlong emperor, and by independent producers under the reigns of Jiaqing and Guangxu.

Realistically this class division grossly oversimplifies the social structure, misrepresenting the complexities of most occupations that necessarily involved them in secondary pursuits. Moreover, the structure excludes a wide variety of occupations such as the gardeners, entertainers, hostlers, physicians, diviners, *baojia* representatives, and actors which Li Guangting described as part his village social order. But since this blatant Confucian fallacy was supported by the state as a valid discourse, the fictive class structure retained actual resonance in local society even beyond the decline of the state that created it, prompting people, including *nianhua* printers, to reproduce it for local consumption.

The perpetuation of that ideal through private sponsorship can be seen in the late Qing/Republican era in a print from Yangliuqing in which the artist conspicuously uses spatial organization to present the subjects on an equal plane, without regard to relative class status (fig.4.1). Here the 'four classes' of people are an elderly farmer carrying a hoe and accompanied by his assistant with a shoulder pole burdened with grain. Next to the farmer is a scholar with

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207 Li Guangting *Xiangyan Jieyi* ca. 1850a, passim.
two servants carrying his books and zither. Under the canopy the merchant with a feather duster
deals in precious stones and coral as his assistant unpacks a container of valuables. Finally,
representing the artisan, is a weaver woman and her son holding rolls of cloth, which supports a
'women weave' sub-theme from state agricultural propaganda (see later discussion). A further
representation of the work of the artisan is the bridge that the weaver is about to cross. An
important point is that this particular print was designed by a reform minded Yangliuqing printer
who had issued further examples of print aimed at instigating moral revival and
self-strengthening in the very late-Qing or early Republic. The inscription reads:
Study battle, strengthen daily,
Scholars form a single faction,
Compete to become stronger,
Coordinate merchants, exhort workers,
In China farming always comes first,
But this a shortcoming, it is ones' duty to serve as a soldier.

A Republican era print from Yangjiabu presents the narrative in comparatively 'vulgar'
terms (fig.4.2 a, b). The Yangjiabu version of 'Scholar-Official, Peasant, Artisan, Merchant'
organizes its subjects into roughly distinct frames. Unlike the Yangliuqing print, the professions
are ranked according to the Confucian hierarchy with scholar-officials and farmers at the top,
followed by artisans and merchants holding the lowest status. But while this print reproduces the
official categorizations, the qualitative status remains ambiguous. From a lateral perspective the
first is the Shi, or scholar-gentry. Labelled as 'high class' (gaodeng), the scholar resides in the
'Hall of Learning' (xuetang) with his studious acolytes, beside which is an inscription reading
'Yanshan teaches five sons' (Yanshan Jiao Wuzi). Yanshan here refers to Dou Yujun, the above
mentioned poet whose five sons each passed the imperial examinations. Next to the Shi are the
Nong, or farmers, who simultaneously plow, pack, and seed the land under the redundantly
labeled sun. The inscription reads 'Hou Ji teaches the people' (houjijiaomin), Hou Ji indicating the Minister of Agriculture under Emperor Shun, who was also widely regarded as the God of the Soil. The separation of the following two classes into a separate print distinct from scholar-official and farmer conforms to the ideal expressed by Wang Chen in Treatise on Agriculture - that of the four classes these two are the all important 'root' of the society, while artisans and merchants are the superfluous 'branches'.

The configuration of artisan and merchant in print, however, indicates a much more complicated status. Here the work of the artisan, Loyang Bridge, is prominent. But the artisan is replaced by characters from the Guanyin legend 'Three Strike Loyang Bridge'. According to legend, a filial official named Cai began construction of Loyang Bridge in memory of his mother. When construction was delayed by a shortage of funds the goddess Guanyin transformed herself into a beautiful maiden and stood in a boat beneath the unfinished bridge, promising to wed anyone who could hit her with a piece of gold. The bottom of her boat was soon filled with money, which she donated to the scholar for the completion of his project. Finally, at the theoretical low end of the hierarchy, the merchant is seated in a luxurious cart as he returns from his business travels. As he nears his comfortable quarters he reads a book while his servants deliver the profits of the venture in wheel barrow and shoulder pole laden with gleaming jewels, another mound of wealth waits beneath their feet. The inscription reads 'Grow in Wealth and Return Home'.

The class distinction evident in the Yangjiabu print is in sharp contrast to that from Yangliuqing which the artist imbues with a message of class equality. But in the relatively 'vulgar' Yangjiabu print, and to a lesser extent in the Yangliuqing print, the infusion of money

also makes status ambiguous. The merchant residence appears as sumptuous as the scholar's, and the book in his hand suggests equal access to education. So while the notion of class distinction propagated by the central state was still potent in rural China, those distinctions were also given narrative values that go beyond the moral codification. By examining the four classes as they appear in the broader scope of nianhua representation, we may acquire a deeper appreciation of how class and social organization was understood and idealized in rural China.

4.2.1 Scholar Official (Shi)

How is it that scholars stand at the head of society? Because they study the books of the Sages, know the rights of things, are pure minded, and are examples to the people in word and deed.
- *The Amplified Instruction to the Sacred Edict* Maxim VI

If anyone can be described as a model official it was Zheng Banqiao (Zheng Xie). That is not to say that his place in history was unsullied (it was), but in at least one region of China Zheng enjoys a highly laudatory memory of his days in office. Mentioned above for his views on iconography, Zheng was also a scholar, artist, poet, and philanthropist. Born into a scholarly family of declining fortunes in Xinghua, Jiangsu (in the vicinity of Yangzhou), Zheng eventually passed the imperial examinations, becoming a xiucai during the Kangxi reign, juren under Yongzheng, and finally a jinshi in the Qianlong era. At the age of forty-nine Zheng was posted away from his home to Shandong, first to Fanxian and then to Weixian in 1746.

In Weixian Zheng is famous for many things, such as renovating the above mentioned City God Temple, but he is most respected for his efforts on behalf of the common people of Weixian. During his term of office, Weixian was struck by the worst drought in a century, creating a severe refugee problem and forcing people into cannibalism. We can interpret Zheng's

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F.W. Bailer (trans.) *Sacred Edict* 1892, p. 65.
feelings toward the situation from poems written at the time - 'Fleeing the Desolation', 'Returning Home', 'Thoughts of Returning' which described the devastation and cautiously criticized the government for its slow response. But the act for which Zheng is most noted is his distribution of grain from the state granaries, and appropriation of grain reserves from the local gentry - a measure that would eventually cost him his career.\(^{210}\) In appreciation, the people of Weixian dedicated an honorary ancestral shrine to the popular magistrate and have ever since viewed him not only as an artist and a scholar but also as an honourable official. But although the nianhua production centre of Yangjiabu was under Zheng's jurisdiction, there are no nianhua representations of this 'honourable official'. Despite his local popularity, Zheng's personae had not been transferred into the wider field of narrative in the way that 'Judge Bao', for example, had been made famous by Yuan courtroom dramas.

One distinctively 'Yangjiabu style' print (fig.4.3) by Yang Fang (1806-1890) depicts the founding myth of the Judge Bao cycle, 'Bao Gong Takes Office'. According to legend Bao Gong (Bao Cheng, AD 999-1062) was a commoner who refused to leave his unharvested crops even when called upon to take up the office of Chief Investigative Censor. But Tianguan saved the situation by dispatching a team of immortals to take in the grain, thus allowing Bao Gong to fill his post without sacrificing his crop.\(^{211}\) Numerous other representations of the forthright official investigators can be found in theatrical print from each of the nianhua production centres discussed here.

\(^{210}\) Li Mingzhong Weifang Gujin Renwu p.150. Following Zheng's resignation from office he returned to Xinghua and then to Yangzhou where he obtained his greatest artistic fame as one of the 'Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou'.

\(^{211}\) Qu Zhengli, Yangjiabu Nianhua Fengzheng Zhiuanji 1989, p.162, Judge Bao also served as the model for Van Gulik's 'Judge Dee' mysteries.
Outside of theatrical representations, the image of the official is strikingly different, with the stern and forthright Song dynasty Judge replaced with joyous depictions of the 'parade of the zhuaryuan (top scholar)'. As was the case with Zheng Banqiao, the scholar would aspire to rise through the examination system, obtaining the lowest rank of xiuce, followed by juren and jinshi for the highest or 'metropolitan' degree. The honour of zhuaryuan was reserved for those who obtained the best evaluation in each of the three levels of examination. The zhuaryuan prints generally depict a scene in which at least one, but often three recently awarded scholars return home in triumph. Fig.4.4, 'Parade of the Zhuaryuan' presents such literati riding on horseback, presided over by the God of Literature, who was patron to examination success. The scholars approach the zhuaryuan fang ('zhuaryuan residence'- ironically, written incorrectly) where the gate is marked by the honorary ke poles, which prove that a member of that family had obtained official status in past or present.

The inscription reads: 'Honesty and kind heartedness, passed on through the generations, meritorious and beneficent deeds as great as the sky, when ice and snow are on the ground, give clothing to charity, fix the bridge, repair the road, when repaired later generations produce civil and martial zhuaryuan'. This text outlines some specific expectations of the locally successful scholar-gentry; act out of compassion for the people and perform good works, such as interceding in times of starvation, providing clothing or renovating a City God temple. As for 'fix the bridge, repair the road', it was frequently the case that scholar-officials would remit part of their salary and other earnings to fix the bridges and roads of their home district. So while the immediate and extended family of the official would be the primary beneficiaries of examination success, the benefits were often extended to the home community at large. The fact that this print was likely
circulated in the early Republic suggests that, like the ke poles in Taitou, the examination system and the prestige of the imperial scholar retained relevance long after the death of the system itself.212

Whereas 'Parade of the Zhuangyuan' omits any reference to wealth, in other examples of this type the zhuangyuan scholar is depicted as awash in silver, gold, and other examples of material wealth. While wealth was not part of the official job description, there was little doubt in anyone's mind that becoming a top official, or even a county magistrate was a ticket to substantial financial gains. As Chang Chung-li has detailed in *The Income of the Chinese Gentry* (1962), while the basic salary of a country magistrate was in itself substantial, this was augmented through numerous other sources of income drawn from the performance of a wide range of services, favours, taxes, and investments, not to mention graft - creating the potential for income which was only limited by the abilities of the individual.

In the late Qing the quintessential wealthy official was Li Hongzhang, who is referred to in certain *nianhua* as a 'living God of Wealth' (see later discussion). Li was joined in his capacity for parlaying official positions into massive fortunes by officials like Zhang Zhidong and Ding Richang. Less famous nationally, but more relevant to Weixian were the Ding family (no relation to Ding Richang). The Ding family was the richest of the commonly acknowledged 'four big landlords' of Weixian. Some estimated their total property at over 8,000 *mu*, but since local *mu* were three times the usual size, they probably held as much as 24,000 *mu* by normal standards. In addition to their land holdings the family owned the largest pawn shop in Weixian, and competed in Tianjin and Shanghai with those owned by Li Hongzhang. The primary monument to their prosperity was the Ding family home, Shihuyuan, which to this day is one of the finest examples

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of historical residential architecture in Shandong. While the actual origin of their wealth has not been determined, in the 1930s it was assumed that the family must have descended from very high officials, which in reference to data collected by Chang Chung-li is entirely possible. As a testament to the family's continuing political connections in the Republican era Shihuyuan housed the military headquarters of the warlord Governor Zhang Zongchang in 1928, and regularly hosted Governor Han Fuzhu during his tours of inspection in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{213}

The case of Li Hongzhang or the Ding family is a good illustration of how problematic the official distinction between scholar, farmer, and merchant had become in the late Qing, since official power, land-holding, and merchant wealth were often complementary. As will be further investigated under the following discussion of 'merchant' (\textit{shang}), the officially 'unstructured' discourse of material wealth invades the 'structured' discourse of the the upright official by infusing it with money. In other words, the image of the upright official that people were trained to believe was mediated by the image of the wealthy official that people saw and discussed in their daily lives.

4.2.2 \textbf{Farmer (Nong): Work, Gender, and Ritual}

Recognize the importance of husbandry and the culture of mulberry trees in order to insure a sufficiency of food and clothing.

\textit{- The Sacred Edict, Maxim IV}

Never abandon your land lightly on account of occasional natural calamities, and never change your original occupation merely because you hanker for spectacular gains and big profits...Even though not much is left after paying public [taxes] and private [rent], yet by gradual accumulation day after day and month after month, you can achieve an ample living for yourselves and your families, with property for your sons and grandsons to inherit.

\textit{- Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict, Maxim IV}\textsuperscript{214}

\textsuperscript{213} Li Zouzhou 'The Big Landlords of Weixian' \textit{Zhongguo Nongcun} (1) May, 1935. Reprinted in \textit{Agrarian China} 1938, pp. 15-16.

\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Sacred Edicts} and \textit{Amplified Instructions for the Sacred Edicts} cited in Hsiao Kung-chuan \textit{Control in Rural China} 110
These comforting words originated in the first case with the Kangxi emperor's *Sacred Edict*, and in the second case with the Yongzheng emperor, who penned his own lengthy commentaries on right behaviour in *Amplified Instructions of the Sacred Edict*. The statements, while written in the 17th and 18th centuries, represented the most essential moral elements of Qing agricultural policy throughout the nineteenth century when local officials continued to preach this and the remaining fifteen maxims at village gatherings. The intent of the edicts is clear from the blunt tone of the message; that well-being of both state and individual depended on stalwart devotion to farming and weaving.\(^{215}\)

While this represents the most basic element of agricultural policy, the Qing state also supported their village exhortations with a full complement of ritual observances in the capital. To this effect the *Manual of the Ministry of Ceremonies* ranks the Spirits of the Soil and the Grains at the first degree, the Patron Saints of Agriculture (Shen Nong) and Sericulture (Lei Zu) at the second degree, and the God of the Soil at the third degree. At lower priorities the sacrifices were extended to the sun, moon, planets, various stars, clouds, rain, wind and thunder, all of which were supposed to be of critical importance to agriculture.\(^{216}\) As this itemization of the attendant ceremonies demonstrates, no expense was spared and the emphasis on pomp and splendour was maintained throughout.

For all their detail, the *Sacred Edict* and the *Manual of the Ministry of Ceremonies* do not indicate the effect of ritual on local society. And while the *Sacred Edict* and its variations were designed to be comprehensible to the rustics of village China, there is little indication of how that message was understood by its audience. Nor is it known to what extent the lofty rituals of the

\(^{215}\) *China* 1960, pp. 187-89.

\(^{216}\) Hsiao Kung-chuan *Control in Rural China* 1960, pp. 185-190.

emperor were intended for the eyes of heaven alone, whether they were meant to impress the
common people, or if the message of ritual was understood. The translation of ritual into village
print provides insight into each of these questions.

A) Spring Plowing and Sericulture

Once a year at the Temple of Agriculture in Beijing, a day in the third moon, whose
cyclical representation contained the character hai, was chosen for the plowing of the ceremonial
field and the worship of Shen Nong, the 'divine farmer'. After due ceremony the emperor would
discard his dragon robes and take up the yellow plow hitched to a golden ox and, assisted by
three princes, nine high officials, and thirty four 'old farmers' hand picked from the metropolitan
area, would plow three furrows up and back. One farmer would lead the ox, and two others
would assist with the plow. Other ministers would follow behind sowing rice from a green seed
box. When the emperor had completed his share of the work he would retire and watch each of
the three princes, with similar accompaniment, plow five furrows up and back with a red plow,
followed by the Prefect sowing wheat. Following this the nine high officials would take their turn
in plowing nine furrows each with a red plow and a black ox and followed by the sub-prefect
who sowed millet and beans. All of this was done in the company of assistants holding flags,
musicians playing music and fourteen more farmers chanting, beating gongs, and playing musical
instruments. When the ceremonial plowing was complete all would prostrate themselves to the
emperor and the farmers were taken back to finish the plowing, rewarded with a roll of cloth, and
presumably sent home.

Although the plowing ceremony did not necessarily take place on the 'second day of the second month', the
public festival fell on this day and so the ritual is often associated with it. Er Yue Er is also the birthday of
the God of the Soil. The silk-worm rituals were not represented locally.

The inclusion of several dozen 'old farmers' in the ritual ensured that the ceremony would be conducted back to the villages of the metropolitan area, from where the experience of the sacrifice would make its way into oral culture. To support the oral transmission of the event further reference was made to the emperor's plowing and the empress's sericulture in the Sacred Edict. And lest people fail to appreciate the significance of the ritual, the Sacred Edict stated that "there can be no question that it [the imperial ceremony] was to set the empire an example that the people might copy." 219

In village China, representations of the plowing ceremony indicate more than just a passing interest in the agricultural rites of the emperor. A Yangjiabu print 'Er Yue Er' ('Second Month, Second Day'), for example, presents the scene in two strata. In the lower stratum the emperor is behind the plow, being assisted by his servants and ministers, while in the upper stratum the empress arrives in a procession to serve the emperor his meal. 220 The inscription reads "On the second day of the second month, the dragon raises its head, long live the Emperor who drives the golden ox and the Queen Consort who comes with food, they bless and protect the common people and they will reap a plentiful harvest" (fig.4.5).

A second and more decorative print from Wuqiang represents a similar scene in which the emperor drives the golden ox assisted by three ministers and attended by a female servant. As

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219 F.W. Baller (trans.) The Sacred Edict 1892, p. 43.
220 On the ceremony see E.T. Williams 'Agricultural Rites in the Religion of Old China' JNCBRAS 67 1936. Gamble's Dingxian includes a proverb that is very similar to the inscription on the Yangjiabu print: On the second day of the Second Moon, The dragon raises his head, The emperor plows the fields, And the ministers help him drive the cows, The empress, the National Mother, Makes the porridge herself and sends it, To the emperor and the ministers working in the fields. All pray for a rich harvest throughout the year. -cited in Sidney Gamble Ting Hsien 1954, p.396
in the Yangjiabu print, the empress is seen in the act of delivering food to the labouring emperor. The inscription here reads, "On the second day of the second month the dragon raises its head. The emperor plows the field, the officials drive the ox and the empress sends rice. The five grains will be in abundance and there will be peace at harvest. Dated Xinhai year" (fig.4.6).

The presence of the nianhua in the village during imperial times is an indication of the effectiveness of the bureaucratic myth making process in propagating awareness of central state institutions to the village, however adulterated the ceremony had become by the time it reached the nianhua market. The dating of the Wuqiang print as Xinhai year indicates that it was originally issued in either 1791, 1851 or 1911. Since it is unlikely that an obsolete printing block would have survived from 1851, let alone 1791, it is best to assume that this print was to be found on the market in 1911, the last year of the Xuantong era. The fact that the emperor was only six years old at the time, or that whoever conducted the ceremony on his behalf would not have worn official dragon robes, is unimportant to the composition of the print.  

The flexibility of representation was possible because, like heroes from classical novels, the figure of the Emperor was an eternal symbol that did not have a direct relationship with reality. The fact that the imperial system was on the brink of destruction was irrelevant to peasants who wanted to inaugurate the agricultural year with as much auspiciousness as they could muster. In this case the symbol of the emperor and his consorts was as versatile as that of the God of Wealth, Kitchen God, or any of the dozens of other icons that transcended politics and converged with narrative.

This also raises the question about just how highly regarded the Qing court was in popular iconography, the answer being not at all. In all the thousands of nianhua still extant, there are very few that refer in any way to the Qing, except in calendars appended to other prints. Some interesting exceptions do occur, such as the 'picture of the Royal Family' from the Puyi era Shanghai, and Cixi Flees to Xi'an from Yangjiabu, but even the classic Qing novel Dream of the Red Mansion was seldom represented in rural print.
In practical terms, prints and their relevant festivals do not tell the farmers exactly when to plant or conduct other agricultural activities, but they are a concrete reminder of the time of season based on which the farmer could calculate when to actually begin planting. This indicates one of the primary functions of the festive calendar - to create a sense of regularity in passage of time, which gave it meaning and allowed people to take advantage of its progress. The Er Yue Er print, therefore, was on occasion a literal marker of agricultural time, and always a means to bring symbolic content to the passing of agricultural time.

The feminine equivalent to plowing the sacred field was the visit of the empress to the temple of the goddess of silk. The goddess is officially identified as Lei Zu, the concubine of the Yellow Emperor and daughter of Xi Ling, who is said to have taught people to raise silkworms and produce silk. Under the Qing dynasty an auspicious day in spring, its cycle containing the character si, was chosen for the empress to conduct the rites at the temple of Lei Zu. As with the emperor and his plow, the empress was assisted by a retinue, this time including two imperial concubines, three princesses, four ladies of rank and forty-six other women who acted as 'silk-worm mothers' and 'silk-worm midwives'. On the prescribed day the tablet of Lei Zu was placed in a yellow tent in the garden of the temple. In another tent, where the rites were to be conducted, all of the copious sacrificial items were prepared for use by the empress. The following day the empress would lead the women out to collect mulberry leaves to feed the silk-worms. The empress used a golden hook to collect leaves from the first trees on the west and east, the two imperial concubines would harvest leaves from the second trees with silver hooks, and so on in descending order, and with declining grades of hooks, until the common women ended the procedure with hooks of lacquer. The leaves were then fed to the worms, and some
time later the empress returned to the temple to reel a quantity of silk. This would be dyed in vermilion, green and yellow, and eventually woven into ceremonial garments.\textsuperscript{222}

In Yangjiabu the printed patron of silkworms was the 'Silkworm Goddess,' who is referred to as erjie (second sister), but likely represents Lei Zu (fig.4.7).\textsuperscript{223} The discovery of such a print from Yangjiabu is somewhat unusual since sericulture was not characteristic of most of the North China plain. But with the development of the international silk-market Shandong did begin to develop as a major exporter of 'yellow silk', otherwise known as Tussah or Tussores, which was woven into the well known 'Shantung Pongee'. By 1921 the industry had an annual export value of three million HK taels, accounting for a substantial portion of China's silk exports.\textsuperscript{224} After 1915 a modern steam silk filature, established with Japanese and other foreign capital, was opened in the Chefoo (Yantai) but, like the nianhua print industry, even up to 1926 much of the production was still controlled by domestic processing.\textsuperscript{225}

In the print the goddess and her two maids sit in the 'Palace of the Silkworm Saint.' A rough interpretation shows the inscription to be in the form of verse praising Lei Zu for her patronage and protection:

\begin{quote}
Mulberry trees grow down by the wall, 
The silkworms will flourish on the harvested leaves, 
For people there is the mulberry fruit, sweet as honey, 
Silkworms eat the leaves and secrete yellow filament, 
Erjie makes splendid efforts in caring for the silkworms, 
Our family's silk will be the best of all.\textsuperscript{226}
\end{quote}

From the votive quality of the print we can tell that farm women made offerings to the goddess in return for her guidance, and the content clearly indicates that this was strictly a women's activity.

\textsuperscript{222} E.T. Williams 'The Worship of Lei Tsu, Patron Saint of Silk Workers' \textit{JNCBRAS} 66, 1935, p. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{223} Other silkworm deities were male. See, for example, Mao Dun's 'Spring Silkworms' for description of the local guardian in south-China.
\textsuperscript{224} Lillian Li \textit{China's Silk Trade} 1981, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid. p. 117.
\textsuperscript{226} Erjie is assumed to refer to Lei Zu.
Other prints, such as those from *Bianmin Tu’an*, and *Nong Shu* that do not fall into the *nianhua* classification, also depict men and women worshipping at an altar to one of the silkworm guardians.\(^{227}\)

The inconsistency in the print is that where most Shantung silk was produced by worms fed on oak leaves, those in the print are fed on mulberry leaves, indicating two possible scenarios. The first is that the print was designed for export to regions that did use mulberry leaves, although if this were the case the silk should not, as the inscription indicates, have been 'yellow filament', but white. The second, and more likely scenario is that the print was designed for the provincial market, but that the mulberry leaf represented an aesthetic ideal established by a precedent set long before Pongee silk, described by the print as 'yellow filament', became fashionable as an export commodity. As the Sacred Edict instructs, although not all provinces supported sericulture, even "cotton goods, woven with the hemp and cotton...are (materials) for clothing. Hence all is included in the phrase 'mulberry culture'."\(^{228}\)

B) Pictures of Plowing and Weaving

Closely connected with the Qing government's ritual devotion to plowing and weaving were the well known attempts to propagate the rural ideal through graphic means. The 'Pictures of Plowing and Weaving' can be traced to the pro-agricultural policies of the Song dynasty, which issued large numbers of the *Nong Shu* (*Treatise on Agriculture*) containing reproductions of 'Pictures of Plowing and Weaving'. This practice was renewed in the Qing dynasty by the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors, who ordered the *Treatise on Agriculture* reissued along with

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\(^{227}\) Li Loulou *Zhongguo Minjian Chuantong Jieri*, 1992, pp. 80-81.

\(^{228}\) F.W. Baller (trans.) *The Sacred Edict* 1892, v.1, p. 45-46.
the 'Pictures of Plowing and Weaving', one set of which the Kangxi emperor inscribed with his own calligraphy. The intent of these pictures is again explained in the *Sacred Edict*:

Our Sacred Ancestor, The Benevolent Emperor filled with loving concern for you his subjects, had a volume engraved, [called] 'Planting and Weaving [illustrated by] Woodcuts,' in which he sketched in detail the joys and sorrows of farmers and weavers. This beyond all question, was to urge you to devote your energies to that which is fundamental. Will you not all reflect, and in deed and in truth attach importance to husbandry?\(^{229}\)

It is doubtful whether many of these standardized pictures based on the *Treatise on Agriculture* ever fell in to hands of *nianhua* printers to be reproduced in the village. Most obviously, this is because while the ideal of 'pictures of ploughing and weaving' appears in *nianhua*, their form and composition are entirely different from the official state versions. While the *Gengzhi Tu* (Pictures of Ploughing and Weaving) are composed of separate scenes describing individual acts of farming and sericulture, *nianhua* generally adjust the original paddy fields adjusted to reflect the dry-land agriculture of North China, and combine multiple tasks into a single print. One such print from Yangjiabu, titled 'The Ten Tasks of Men' (fig.4.8), shows all of the agricultural activities of the season, from seeding to harvesting compressed into a single scene. Agricultural workers are depicted in a state of high exuberance, the hardships of labour and potential for poor yield not an issue to those who posted the print during the coldest part of winter in anticipation of warmer weather and more abundant food. Almost hidden in the lower-left corner a woman assists with the harvest despite bound feet. The inscription at the top reads:

> Of all the people in the world, farmers are the most important, one drives the plow with the seed box (*loudou*) attached behind. If every year there be drought, use the packer (*dun*) and do not worry if the weather is dry, the man in front cuts the wheat and drives the cart home.

\(^{229}\) Ibid., p. 50.
The curious choice of phrases, it turns out, is not the product of the literary skill of the artist, but a jumble of phrases and characters accurately and inaccurately appropriated from the agricultural handbook *Shandong Zazi* and strung together in a roughly literate fashion.²³⁰

Another print from Wuqiang (fig.4.9) is similar to the first print from Yangjiabu in its representation of the entire agricultural year compressed into a single print. And again like Yangjiabu it includes a majority of men, but at least two women, as well as several children partaking in the harvesting activities. The inscription on this print follows some familiar themes, and the didacticism of the inscription in combination with the sound technical advice makes one suspect that the words have their origin in a government tract or almanac as well:

- Get up early in the morning, put the ox out to pasture late at night,
- Collect animal dung and ash for fertilizer, diligently harvest the fields,
- Of the six kinds of grain, plant them in variety and follow crop rotation,
- Plant the grain at the correct time according to type,
- And arrange their planting in a suitable order,
- The four seasons, spring, summer, fall, cold weather comes, hot weather goes,
- Plant seedlings according to the correct calendrical period, and at the correct density,
- It is said that heaven will bless the diligent,
- Hard work is rewarded with a full granary,
- When at home respect your elders,
- Rise through the examination system (and become an official),
- Respect the elderly, your Father and Mother,
- All these wishes will soon be realized.

As in the balance of gendered occupations represented in the spring plowing and silk ceremonials, the sequence of 'plowing' pictures has its corresponding representation of 'weaving' pictures. But again, like the local interpretation of plowing prints, both the form and message of the original state sponsored images were tailored for local use. A print from Yangjiabu (fig.4.10),

²³⁰ See Ma Jun *Shandong Zazi* ca.1450, reprinted in *Shandong Wenxian* (6)1, pp. 10-17. A comparison shows the first phrase of ten characters and the later phrase formed by the twenty-sixth through thirtieth characters of the print match precisely several phrases of the handbook. All of the remaining characters are also to be found in the last part of the handbook. According to Zhang Cunwu, the primer continued to be used in Shandong schools until the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War. *Shandong Wenxian* (6)3, p.32.
a copy of which was located by Alexeev (probably in 1907), combines the weaving imagery with another morality message that tells of the 'Ten Daughters in Law of Mr. Zhang':

Mister Zhang had ten sons and lived in Henan Province. His ten daughters-in-law were not idle. As soon as the cotton was bought by the family they at once started to clean and spin it. It is thought that the severe law of the family was strictly observed by them. Weaving is a profitable business and brings in big returns. Five of the sons received an education and obtained the zhuangyuan degrees. Concord in the family is natural. Learn from Mister Zhang how to establish proper order in the family, and then it will be easy to acquire wealth.\textsuperscript{231}

Other representations from Fengxiang in Shaanxi, and Wuqiang bear strong graphic resemblance to the Yangjiabu version, but without literary or moralistic references beyond the appeal to women to keep up their weaving activities. Another print from Wuqiang, however, titled 'A New Version of Nu Shimang (tasks of women) replaces the Yangjiabu moral tale about Mr. Zhang's daughters-in-law with the much more common moral tale of Wang Chun'e, who set the Confucian standard for motherhood (fig.4.11). This story, generally known as 'Second Concubine Teaches the Boy' (sanniang jiaozi) appears in several printing centres, including Zhuxianzhen. The woman, Wang Chun'e, was the second concubine of a merchant named Xue. While on a business trip the man met an untimely death, leaving his women and one child alone with the elderly servant. Eventually the mother of the boy and the first concubine abandoned home and child, leaving only the elderly servant and Wang Chun'e, who refused to marry and devoted herself to the care and education of the boy. At one point, when the boy became rebellious and lazy, Wang Chun'e cut her unfinished weaving from her loom in order to demonstrate the importance of continuous study.\textsuperscript{232} The tale is particularly potent because it

\textsuperscript{231} Translated in Maria Rudova \textit{Chinese Popular Prints} 1988, p.103. \textsuperscript{232} Ihara Shizuka \textit{Man shi zuan seika taisei} 1936, pp. 74-75. Scarlett Jang provides another source for the story in the form of the Ming dynasty semi-historical play \textit{Shang Lu Sanyuan ji}, in which Shang Lu (1414-86), the only person to win all three zhuangyuan titles during the Ming, was similarly admonished by his mother. Scarlett Jang 'Form, Context, and Audience' \textit{Ars Orientalis} 27, 1997 pp. 3-5.
combines all of the gender ideals of maternal self-sacrifice for a son (even a foster son), chastity of the widow (even a concubine), the necessity that women devote themselves to weaving, and the importance of encouraging male children to study.

The connection between the Confucian moral tale and the state encouragement of weaving is further clarified in 'A New Version of Nu Shimang', from Wuqiang, which combines the local interpretation of the 'pictures of weaving' with the local version of 'Third Concubine Teaches the Boy'. Another concise expression of these values can be found in a print from Pingdu in which a young mother teaches her two children, a boy and a girl, to do gender specific tasks, reading and writing for the boy, embroidery for the girl (fig.4.12).

While most prints follow the Treatise on Agriculture segregation of gendered duties by distinguishing between 'plowing' in one print, and 'weaving' in another, a print from Yangliuqing combines 'plowing and weaving' into a single representation, and removes any doubt about its reference through its title, 'a complete picture of plowing and weaving'. The title is figurative since 'plowing' is restricted to the harvest, and 'weaving' is only represented in two of its processes, as opposed to the four or five processes seen in other prints (fig.4.13). And despite overcoming the formal segregation of duties, the print persists in separating male and female work by relegating 'weaving' to the background.

Not far removed from the directives on tilling and weaving is one of the best known of all legends, and its celebration during the 'festival of the double sevens.' The central myth of this festival is the Tang dynasty story of 'Buffalo Boy and Weaver Girl,' a classic tale of ill-starred love and underdog struggle against the abuse of power. According to the most popular interpretation, the goddess 'Weaver Girl' (represented by the star Vega) became betrothed to the
common cowherd known only as 'Buffalo Boy.' The Queen Mother of the West became enraged at the impetuousness of Weaver Girl's union with a mortal and removed her to the far shore of the then terrestrial 'Silver River' (Milky Way). With the assistance of an enchanted buffalo, Buffalo Boy took their two children in pursuit of Weaver Girl, until the spiteful Queen Mother of the West transferred the Silver River to heaven. Again the buffalo interceded and offered his hide, which enabled Buffalo Boy and the children to fly into the heavens. But just as Weaver Girl seemed within reach, the Queen Mother of the West turned the placid waters of the Silver River into a raging torrent which none could cross. This would have forever separated the family if it had not been for the sympathy of the Jade Emperor who took pity on the family by summoning all the magpies of the world to form a bridge over the Silver River on the seventh day of the seventh month, the very day on which this occasion is still celebrated.

The print of 'Buffalo Boy and Weaver Girl' was hung under the awning of the house and on tables set in the courtyard during the festival where offerings were made, and embroidery contests held.233 One print from Alexeev's 1907 collection shows the subject of the festival in an upper stratum, separated from the depiction of the celebration going on in the lower (fig.4.14). As with most festive occasions, theatricals were an integral part of the event and the deities were invoked on stage.234 This festival was associated with the weavers and needle workers who were present in every family, and as Yang notes of Taitou, was alternately known as the 'festival of wishing for skill' in weaving and needle work, the intent of which was to get a good husband. 'Wishing for skill' after all was for girls trying to learn needle work, not boys learning to be cowherds. The didactic nature of embroidery can also be seen in the Pingdu print, which then

234 Wilhelm Weig Chinese Calendar of Festivals 1929, p. 19.
provides some insight into the purpose of embroidery as not just a way to occupy the time of young girls but, like calligraphy for boys, was a skill that emphasized attention to detail and was an indication of one's personal qualities.

According to the 'meaning of the emperor', stability in rural society was guaranteed by strict devotion to gender specific tasks. Not only would such immobility preserve stability, but it would also allow the localities to pay their taxes in grain and cloth, which would ensure the stability of the state. Having been preached to villagers, circulated in state agricultural treatises, and encoded in fairy tales, it is not surprising that this ethic should have been reproduced in the village print industry as *nianhua*. The ethic, moreover, had remained sufficiently relevant to village print makers to cause them to reproduce it in the late Qing and Republican era when 'weaving' was still an important component of the local economy. So long as agriculture and the rural handicraft industry remained the basis of the economy, the state would remain committed to the ideals of 'Plowing and Weaving'.

4.2.3 Artisan (*Gong*)

Craftsmen must prepare materials in their proper season. Practice (your trade) day in and day out, striving to excel (all competitors). On no account practise double dealing, and cheat customers. Whatever line of business one's ancestors have handed down; that their descendants should keep to; whatever they have learnt from boyhood to that they should adhere to the very end. This is for craftsmen to give their attention to their proper business.

*The Amplified Instructions to the Sacred Edict* Maxim X\(^{235}\)

The representation of the artisan is minimal in both the *Sacred Edict* and in *nianhua*, showing not only that the Qing state paid relatively little attention to the moral configuration of the artisan, but that the printers of *nianhua* also had little interest in reproducing it - to the extent

\(^{235}\) F.W. Baller (trans.) *The Sacred Edict* 1892, p. 114.
of excluding them in person from the Republican era Yangjiabu version of the above mentioned
Four Classes.

The most prominent representation of the artisan is the divine artisan Lu Ban, patron deity
to carpenters and other craftsmen. One of Lu Ban's famed skills was as a builder of bridges, and
just as both of the Four Classes prints associate the artisan with the bridge, so do prints from
both Wuqiang and Yangliuqing represent Lu Ban's great accomplishment as the reputed builder
of Zhaozhou Bridge. According to legend this bridge, which still stands in southern Hebei, was
built by Lu Ban himself. After the wondrous bridge was completed the Eight Immortals of Daoist
fame decided to test the structure by crossing over it - a test no normal bridge could withstand.
Fearing that it might collapse Lu Ban leapt into the water and steadied the bridge with his own
hand so that the Eight Immortals crossed without incident. The confluence of the bridge icon in
the 'Four Classes' and in the context of Lu Ban suggests that bridges may have been a popular
representation of the artisan's craft, however the data in print is insufficient to confirm this point
(fig.4.15).

4.2.4 Merchant (Shang)

Merchants must ascertain the state of the market. Buy cheap and sell dear; only be
perfectly fair and square in your dealings. Attend to business whether profits are great
or small. This is for merchants to give proper attention to their proper business.

-Amplified Instructions to the Sacred Edict - Maxim X\textsuperscript{236}

The imperial state did give mild encouragement to people to produce wealth. But as the
Sacred Edict instructs, the production of such wealth was not to be 'spectacular gains and big
profits' that the Ding family or Li Hongzhang had realized, but 'gradual accumulation day after
day and month after month' of the wealth that was "produced by nature, conserved by the

\textsuperscript{236} Ibid., p. 115.
government, and obtained with much labour by [people's] forefathers." Beyond these simple instructions, and the regular denunciations of profit-seekers, there was little state sponsored narrative structure when it came to mercantile matters. There was no officially recognized 'divine merchant' to whom sacrifices could be offered, and there were no state sponsored texts with idealized 'pictures of buying and selling' on which local artists could model a print.

But because of the rise of the wealthy merchant in the late-Qing, there is a wider development of independent 'unstructured' imagery concerning the merchant production of wealth. But although the narrative reconciliation of merchant status subverted the Confucian notion of his formal stature, the iconography did not suddenly embrace a realistic portrayal of the merchant and the production of material wealth. Distinctions concerning the movement and exchange of money and merchandise were not based on good book-keeping practices, but on various family, interpersonal, and cosmological relationships that fall outside the scope of normal economic inquiry. James Scott termed economies of this type 'moral economies,' in which the economic relationships of the village are viewed in terms of subsistence rights and other social arrangements between landlord and tenant. In this analysis ethical relations appear not as a moral contract between cultivator, local landowner, and gentry, but as an idealized relationship with spiritual and political transcendence. The movement of wealth, in other words, was informed as much by religious belief and fatalism as it was by class and state relations.

Ibid., p. 61.

This is not to say that merchants did not have their patron deities and codes of ethics - some of which may be identified with the state. Guandi, for example, was widely recognized as the patron of the merchant, and Huiguan (Merchant Associations) generally included a Guandi temple. Merchant ethics can be found in a number of treatises from late imperial China. These are summarized in Eberhard Social Mobility in Traditional China 1962, pp. 247-251. These codes and deities, however, do not fall within official state discourse.
Nianhua rarely depict wealth in connection with the land-owning or pawn-brokering through which people like Weixian's Ding family generated their fortune, nor in connection with hard work and planning and the 'bounty of nature' as the Sacred Edict suggests. To the contrary, wealth, as depicted in nianhua, originates with the supernatural. That people should not trust hard work or nature as the source of wealth is easily understood in a context where most people laboured their entire lives waiting for nature to provide, but without achieving great financial success, or even reasonable security. Even in the above mentioned case of the 'Ten Daughters-in-law of Master Zhang', while the family was able to make a good profit from the weaving turned out by the family daughters-in-law, real fortune was realized by having them support their husband's studies to become top officials. So while nianhua makers understood the connection between wealth and power, for most people the odds against achieving such goals in reality were extremely slim. Under such conditions, only fatalism could make sense of the highly intangible world of money.

Owing to the elusiveness of wealth, of all the maxims of the Sacred Edicts the admonition against yearning for 'spectacular gains and big profits' was the most frequently transgressed. Even the briefest consideration reveals that nianhua were committed to sumptuous representations of wealth-summoning icons such as the 'God of Wealth', 'money tree', 'Liu Hai Teases the Gold Devouring Toad', 'bottomless pot of jewels', 'coin dragon' and 'treasure horse' just to name a few. The numerical scope of this cult as late as 1936 is suggested by a survey in which Xie Zongtao analyzed 237 prints in the marketplace of Baoding and found that fifty-two (22%) depicted overt wealth summoning iconography.²³⁹ So in idealistic terms 'gradual

²³⁹ Xie Zongtao 'Shuo Fangjian Nianhua' Hebei Yuekan 4(2), 1936, p. 3.
accumulation' of wealth was an ideal that ranked far behind the expressed desire for 'spectacular gains and profits.'

There are several notable exceptions which do associate the actual activities of the merchant with the realization or loss of profit. One print from Pingdu depicts a business enterprise in which a merchant journeys north to trade in horses, a familiar theme to Shandong printers who often conducted their own enterprises in Manchuria. The inscription explains the content of the print: "Trading in horses from beyond the gate (of the Great Wall, i.e. Inner Mongolia or Manchuria). This year the profits are good, so hire a sedan chair borne by mules, and a body-guard to escort you home" (fig. 4.16).

A second 'merchant', or more accurately 'peddler' print seems to indicate not the way in which money is earned, but the way in which money is lost (fig. 4.17). 'Crossing Monkey Mountain' appears in some variation in most of the northern nianhua centres, usually the peddler deals in straw hats, although occasionally he is seen with peaches. In each case the peddler is transporting his wares across a monkey infested mountain where he is set upon by a thieving band of macaques. The inscription on fig. 4.17 describes the scene as follows:

Coming down this mountain path,
Monkeys grab my straw hats,
It is beyond my control,
A bustling market, with vigorous buying and selling.

Depending on how it is read, the image might express either the vicissitudes of market competition, or the benefits of a busy market. As the monkeys do not appear to be paying for the wares there is a stronger case for the former interpretation. Focussing on the allegorical aspects found in the pictures, the image might also have referred to the likin (lijin) taxes that cut deeply
into the profits of a traveling merchant, and the petty likin official to whom the derogatory title 'monkey wearing hat' could have applied.

Most other representations do not make this connection between trade and financial prosperity. Rather, the means to influence monetary income appeared the same as the means to influence other natural phenomena - which is through supernatural intervention. A famous merchant named Shen Wansan, for example, was a historical personage who made his fortune trading in Suzhou during the early Ming dynasty and is noted for contributing (not necessarily by choice) to the construction of much of the Nanjing city wall.240 The Yangjiabu print of the merchant shows Shen and his family shaded by a money tree and standing in a boat already piled with fish and ingots of gold and silver. As Shen prepares to cast his net a pair of water spirits, directed by the Dragon King on shore, rise from the depths with an urn of treasures. The inscription explains that Shen Wansan from Henan province had made his fortune in fishing, and that the Dragon King provided him with a substantial grant - 'Wealth, fortune and glory will last myriad years' (fig.4.18). Not only does the print omit any reference to Shen's trading practices, but it credits his fortune to a combination of supernatural benevolence and work.

The most potent wealth summoning agent in the Chinese pantheon is the stellar God of Wealth. Alexeev comments that in late Qing/Republican China "probably all China worships him .... Certainly the God is venerated by the entire rustic population which welcomes him on New Year's Eve with extravagant display of reverence. All trades are his special concern, and his shrine is prominent in every shop".241 But although the wealth summoning icons are overt, the

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240 Timothy Brook notes that Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of Ming, forced Shen to pay 1/3 of the expenses on the wall, and also appropriated Shen's garden for use as an internment camp for the Ministry of Justice, furnished his palace with Shen's household goods, and exiled Shen's family to the frontier. This harsh reality is in sharp contrast to the extremely optimistic nianhua portrayals of the merchant. Timothy Brook Confusions of Pleasure 199_ p.22.

cult should not be understood as the expression of a simple lust for gross material wealth. Seen in the context of the wider field of representation, wealth icons are intended to work in harmony with other values in the production of a more general well-being.

Strictly speaking, the Gods of Wealth, like the Door Gods, were represented by both a 'civil' and 'martial' identity, usually in the persons of Bi Gan, the forthright Minister of the Zhou dynasty, and Zhao Gongming, also of the Zhou dynasty. But Alexeev explains that in many cases where a print depicts the 'God of Wealth' visiting a home, this was not a specific immortal, but a mortal who became a 'living God of Wealth' either through the realization of great wealth, or by the use of that great wealth to assist the less fortunate. One example is Shen Wansan, who used his great wealth to help establish the Ming dynasty and is recognized in one Yangjiabu print as a 'living God of Wealth'. Another example cited by Alexeev bears the following inscription:

Money is a good fellow, round and square alternately. He will run everywhere. Have you money? Then be glad. Without money no step can be taken. How difficult! With ten-thousand in your pocket try hard and you may attain to any nobility, any rank. Such things are handed down from generation to generation. The rich eat and drink what they like from finest dishes with music and song, but the poor man wears his dirty shirt all his life. If you have money, fear not to go wherever you like, even Yunnan or Kuichou. The years pass until you have a good fortune. Then you buy rank and a button for your cap and you dress in excellent furs. Then you pack up your wealth, hire satellites, armed with foreign pistols, and return home. Everyone comes to congratulate you on becoming a Ts'ai Shen, and to admire you. To sum up, all other words and things are useless. The best is money - I say it most emphatically. 242

It must also be noted that merchants had appropriated one of the most respected individuals in Chinese history to act as their patron deity. Alexeev noted that Guandi, who in addition to serving as a Door God, stood as a generic guardian and wealth-summoning deity for home, village, and country alike. Merchant families in particular respected Guandi as a patron,

242 Basil Alexeev *The Chinese Gods of Wealth* 1928, p. 11. The presence of both 'foreign pistols' and 'buying rank' would put this in the late Qing, but it is still possible that it was still circulating later, and that people just ignored the fact that titles were no longer for sale. Alexeev likely obtained it in 1907.
and his image was regularly posted in shops. In addition, Merchant Association Halls found in all trading centres such as the eastern Shandong Grand Canal city of Liaocheng contained elaborate Guandi temples, and other trading centres, including Zhuxianzhen, contained Guandi temples funded by merchant profits. The connection between class, wealth and power brings us back to the question of how those who obtained wealth as merchants were perceived as an abstract ideal. Someone like Shen Wansan, or those who mixed official power and earnings with merchant capital, like Li Hongzhang or the Ding family, could also obtain the 'unstructured' classification of 'living Caishen,' a distinction that is concerned only vaguely with the origin of wealth, but is much more explicit about the immediate realization of wealth as it is delivered to the door. By avoiding the hard reality that wealth was obtained from rents and usury, and used to buy office and power, the wealthy were successful in supporting a narrative structure that provided them with social support and legitimacy. The failure of the state to provide structure for wealth thus opened the opportunity for it to become a powerful alternative, or more often, a supplement to Confucianism. The mythical and pseudo-mythical origins of wealth, connected with the benevolence of the God of Wealth and other wealth summoning-agents, served to consecrate the acquisition of wealth despite what the Sacred Edict had to say on the subject.

Li Loulou, Zhongguo Minjian Chuantong Jieri, 1992 p.194 refers to merchants paying respects to their god several days after the rest of the general population. There are also differential days for Kitchen God celebrations in the south, "Guan San, Min Si, Dan Jia Wu'. Officials on the third, commoners on the fourth, and 'boat people' on the fifth.

The present-day Zhuxianzhen Nianhua Research Institute is located in this compound next to the Yue Fei temple. Recently both temples have begun to undergo renovation.
4.3 The Lantern Festival and Village Hierarchy

In the above analysis, *nianhua* prints help us to understand how the ideals of class and hierarchy were understood by village printers, although they do little to indicate how the actual village hierarchy functioned, or how certain social groups and individuals used print and symbol to assert actual status outside of the home. By situating prints designed for lanterns within the context of the public lantern festival, the following discussion will demonstrate the workings of village social stratification and status manipulation of symbol.

Lanterns, displayed in small numbers inside the home, or in large numbers in temples, streets, and other public places were intended for the entertainment of a viewing audience. Because they were public, the display and content of lanterns involved the dynamics of community status and entertainment preferences. This study examines the structure of the lantern festival, and then considers two divergent styles of lantern print, one being the 'structured' product of local status and power relations, the second being the 'unstructured' product of what Bahktin called 'carnival' relations. The comparison shows that printed historical narratives in the village were derived from both of literate, and oral/ theatrical culture.

Dun's description of the lantern festival in Beijing in 1900 introduces this first, largest, and most open public event of the year:

The period from the thirteenth to the seventeenth is all called the Lantern Festival, but it is the fifteenth which is the true Lantern Festival. Each year on the day of the Lantern Festival there is a feast within the Palace, and fire-crackers are set off. While all shops display lanterns, it is those of the big streets, as at Tung Ssi (si) P'ailou and Ti An Men, which are most numerous. The Ministry of Works comes next, and after that the Ministry of War, and no other place can measure up to these.  

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245 Dun Lichen (Bodde trans.) *Annual Customs and Festivals In Peking* 1906a, pp. 6-7. Bodde notes that the lanterns at the Ministry of War had been prohibited after 1883.
As pictured in *Qing Su Jiwen* (A Record of Qing Customs, fig.4.19) festival lanterns took on diverse forms, some being elaborately decorated constructions, others being simpler and designed to frame a picture. Bredon wrote that in Beijing of the 1920s lanterns were sold in pairs to be displayed on either side of the door, or in sets of eight or sixteen to form a complete picture and were displayed on shop-fronts, outside temples, and on various pedestrian thoroughfares. According to both Bredon and Nagao there was much friendly competition among shop-keepers and temple management who went to considerable expense to include hand-painted silk or gauze covered lanterns in their displays.\(^\text{246}\) Other lanterns, such as those observed in Kaifeng by Lou Zikuang in 1936, were carried by children and took on fanciful shapes including "rabbit lanterns, fish lanterns, monkey-eating-peach lanterns, goat-head lanterns, embroidered-ball lanterns, lotus lanterns...even for the lowest budget there are old lanterns patched together."\(^\text{247}\) Gamble writes of the Dingxian Dragon Lantern Show in which a thirty foot painted dragon illuminated by lanterns was paraded through the streets, followed by the 'Qi Qiao Lantern Show' in which a group of choreographed dancers paraded lanterns decorated with flowers, birds, butterflies, characters, and poems. Artisans from Wuqiang described the scene graphically in a print depicting dragon and lion dances, accompanied by *huahui* - performances of stilt-walkings and 'boat running on dry land' (fig. 4.20).\(^\text{248}\)

The type of lantern that is of interest to this discussion are the latter type containing, as Gamble wrote, 'characters and poems'. These were similar in form to the hand-painted Beijing lanterns that in multiples formed a larger picture or narrative, but in rural China silk and gauze lantern panels were often replaced with less expensive paper prints, such as those produced in

\(^{246}\) J. Bredon and I. Mitrophanow *The Moon Year* 1927, p. 138.  
\(^{247}\) Lou Zikuang *Xinnian Fengsu Zhi* 1936.  
\(^{248}\) Sidney Gamble *Ting Hsien* 1954, p. 336.
Wuqiang. Like their Beijing relatives, rural lanterns came in sets: two lanterns for display on either side of a doorway were called a *dui* (pair), four lanterns used to light a room were a *tang* (hall), and a *jie* (street) of thirty-two lanterns were prepared for display outdoors. These street-wide displays of multiple lanterns were also customary in smaller centres like Dingxian where at New Year people would hang strings of brightly lit lanterns between the eaves of adjacent houses at night, and replace them with cloth banners during the day.

Assuming that each lantern was composed of four panels, then a street decorated with a *jie* of thirty-two lanterns could have displayed as many as 128 different printed scenes, organized into a lesser number of themes or narratives. This was in addition to the lanterns decorating individual houses. Extant lantern prints from Wuqiang and elsewhere prove that many of the themes and narratives were based on historical/theatrical narratives, criminal cases, and 'riddles' drawn from the literary tradition, and romantic novels - such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *Weishui River*.

The fact that complex literary narratives were found in village prints and lanterns seems to contradict the common assumption of low village literacy. But while the simple presence of such material in the village does not indicate readership, it does raise the possibility that many people, even if illiterate, had a vernacular appreciation of the literary tradition. Alexeev, for example, felt that commoners such as donkey drivers had a surprisingly thorough awareness, if not an understanding of the Chinese literary tradition. Gamble also found that in Dingxian all of the villagers were aware that their former magistrate Su Dongpo had been a famous intellectual.

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250 Nagao Ryuzu Shina Minzokushi 1940-42, p. 446.
of the Song dynasty, and even accredited him with many of their local yangge (rice-planting songs).\textsuperscript{251}

A second and complementary scenario is that esoteric lantern prints were designed for local elite and elite organizations, especially 'lantern associations'. According to Duara, 'Lantern Associations' in North China funded lantern displays and theatricals through rent collected from land owned by the group, and through public donations. More than just a benevolent society, the lantern association was used by its members as a vehicle to define their social prestige and community status.\textsuperscript{252} We can assume, therefore, that senior members of the lantern society would have chosen lantern motifs that reflected favorably on their status by incorporating literary, historical, and moralistic references.

One series of 'literary' lantern prints from Wuqiang depicts famous poets and artists engaged in their hobbies. These include Tao Yuanming with his chrysanthemums, Meng Haoran and his plum blossoms, and Li Bai never far from his jar of wine. In this case the images are clearly defined and simplified interpretations of famous intellectuals, easily deciphered by anyone holding a basic education (such as the senior members of the lantern association). But even in this simplified state the lanterns represent the literary or moralistic interpretation of history that had legitimated the Confucian bureaucracy for aeons, and were in this case conscripted by local elite to legitimize their own position in the village hierarchy. So even if the literary significance of the lantern was lost on the illiterate, the uncomprehended image could still be understood as proof of the sponsor's claim to social seniority (fig. 4.21, 4.22, 4.23).

\textsuperscript{251} Sidney Gamble \textit{Ting Hsien} 1954, p. 329.
\textsuperscript{252} Prasenjit Duara \textit{Culture, Power, and the State} 1988, p. 120.
In contrast to these 'refined' literary motifs are motifs drawn from theatre and vernacular literature. *Zhong Lulin Breaks the Jinguang Battle Formation*, also from Wuqiang, is a graphic version of a legend from the mytho-historical drama *Yang Family Generals* (fig.4.24). This episode begins in the right-centre of the right-hand print and takes the reader through a complex set of battles between General Yang and his adversary Madame Laojun, as the two engage their powers of wit, the supernatural, deceit, and cross-dressing. The 'festive' narrative drawn from the theatre and oral tradition contrasts sharply with the 'status' narratives drawn from the literary tradition. The battle prints are roughly divided into three registers, and further subdivided into numbered scenes in which the plot and characters are described and identified. But despite the stratification and description, the space and order of the panels do not correspond to any sequence that a contemporary viewer would see as coherent. Instead the scenes swirl about the composition filling every inch with action packed drama and dazzling colour, much as staged *xiqu* emphasizes battle, action, and drama over the accurate representation of the original story, or the 'history' on which it is based.

The confluence of both types of narrative in the village indicates that lantern makers designed products to appeal to a diverse set of interests. In some cases these interests represented a hierarchical literary and ethical structure, and in other cases represented the vernacular. The presence of both forms in the village prove that status and festival were mutually configured. Print, therefore, helped to define social status, and to link the individual to the community in its various forms. In comparing the domestic print of the previous chapter to the public print found in the lantern festival we can speculate how print and festival divided the ritual community from the festive community. This is because prints used in festival indicate what types of narrative
were considered 'public' and suitable for open display, as opposed to 'private' and reserved for the home. In contrast to the ritual content of many domestic prints, the festive lantern contains secular, if often mythologized, historical and literary references. Although narratives of this nature could be taken into the ritual spaces of the home and the temple, except for temple processions ritual narratives were less often taken out of the home or temple and displayed in the street.

In conclusion it can be argued that society and economy were not understood in village China as a system of relations between owner and tenant, or productive forces and profit, or between the officially recognized classes. Rather, society and economy consisted of an abstract relationship between the individual or family and the unseen forces that created wealth and status for the fortunate and powerful. In the same way the power of the state was not understood as a direct relationship between ruler and ruled, the calendar was not a technical time keeping device, and the home was not simply a roof over one's head. Beyond primary functions, physical and social worlds were understood as a configuration of ritual and aesthetics that began as structure, were propagated as praxis, and restructured by the conditions of its display as print. Makers and consumers of print were subjected and conducive to extensive conditioning, especially through the Confucian system of ideological indoctrination, however the 'fact' of social conditioning must be seen in light of how people extended and organized that reality through print.
5) Visual Culture and Public Space

'The Imperial City of Paris' (fig. 5.1) is one of several pictures of European subjects produced by Yangjiabu's Yang Zhenshan (1895-1928) in the years after W.W.I. The Imperial City of Paris incorporates both physical subject, and fixed point perspective in its depiction of the French capital in wartime, patrolled by mixed companies of soldiers, and occupied by an electrically equipped 'American armory' Meiguo ziyaoku. 'American bombs' meiguo dapaozi line the street, guarded by the 'Belgian Consul' Biguo Lingshi, wearing a kilt and tam-o'-shanter. Latin script and Arabic numerals are faithfully reproduced on various crates and on the gate through which soldiers march. But despite taking obvious measures to portray the scene as 'reality' (i.e. corresponding to fixed time and fixed spatial relations), the artist does not combine angles, letters, distance, etc. in an entirely convincing manner, and persists in using the older nianhua technique of dividing the scene into its parts by use of a convoluted boundary.

It is tempting to say that as a print artist Yang Zhenshan had broken through to a form of 'proto-realism' through his imperfect use of graphic technique, and depictions influenced by his experience in the West. This conclusion, however, suggests that people like Yang Zhenshan had to break with their past in order to artistically reproduce the present. To the contrary, the artist's interpretation of Paris as an 'Imperial City' stocked with American munitions and occupied by kilt wearing Belgians is based on his personal experience as a member of the 'Coolie Corps' - the 100,000 man labour force recruited from China (primarily Shandong) to serve the Allied effort in World War I. When he returned to Yangjiabu after the war, Yang reproduced his newly acquired experience in his nianhua prints.

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253 Zhang Dianying Yangjiabu Muban Nianhua 1990, p. 91. Also see Wang 1991, and Ona Tadeshige 1944 for other 'Paris' prints from Yangliuqing. While Shandong in general made large contributions to this force, Weixian was an especially active recruitment centre. Franck was told that the recruits from Weixian numbered 90,000. Franck Wandering in North China 1923, p. 314.

254 This division indicates that this is only a partial print, and is missing frames on the left and right.
impressions in a manner which would make them meaningful in his home market, which now contained tens of thousands of fellow veterans of Europe, as well as their countless friends and family.

This example demonstrates how, in the early twentieth century, the trans-local, and even international experience of village printers could be extended to a local audience. But the example also indicates that the locality was not simply at the receiving end of translocal (global) images, but was involved in the same processes that produced the global itself. And this does not begin with World War I; each of the printing centres under discussion here had long been involved in extensive trading networks, producing socially integrated iconography that ranged in topic from pig-pen gods, to ultra-cultivated literati, and xiqu stars depending on commercial demand. So when World War I began, it is natural that Yang Zhenshan and his colleagues should be involved both in its production as event, and reproduction as text.

While the audience for Yang Zhenshan's work was potentially as large as the audience for the better known graphic print industry of Shanghai or Tianjin, Yang Zhenshan's style of representation did not survive as a major visual trope. The processes that produced the 'global' in village print eventually rendered those same images obsolete, as urban commercial interests absorbed markets, photography and lithography replaced wood-block print, and war decimated what remained of the infrastructure of the village handicraft industry. Just as transportation technology and infrastructural change had sidelined Zhuxianzhen around 1900, the continuously changing infrastructure and technology extended that periphery to the remaining village print centres in the 1930s. But while rural printing centres did not become a driving force behind

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255 This framework was proposed in the context of Indian vernacular literature by Sheldon Pollack in ‘The Cosmopolitan Vernacular’ *Journal of Asian Studies* 57(1), 1998, p. 34.
social and cultural change in the late Qing/Republican era, their production can at least show that rural China was not a *tabula rasa* to be inscribed by more highly organized cultural agents. It may also show that culturally, village China was not oriented in any specific trajectory between 'traditionalism' and 'modernism', 'nationalism' or any other specific form of consciousness, but was composed of multi-layered, and frequently contradictory texts.

While the prints discussed in this chapter are radically different from those of the previous discussions, the categories of scrutiny are the same. As outlined in the introduction, these include the geographic and economic relationships between print producers and the effect of that relationship on style, the specific conditions of the production and use of the product; and the cultural codes used in the production and reading of the text. Under the first category, the geographic and economic relationships between production centres are the same as those described above, except that the presence of urban lithographic print must be taken into account. As for the second point, printed items under discussion here have stronger relevance to the market, not just as a means of distribution, but as a site for interpretation and propagation. Finally, the cultural and aesthetic practices which so often located *nianhua* within ritual and ethical codes drawn from antiquity are expanded in the pictures discussed here to include the concept of 'realism' - which for the sake of this discussion, I define as the representation of event and place as they relate to one's own time and space. This also involves the adoption of new graphic techniques and technologies of viewing that are able to convey experience and event as a graphic image.

256 With no direct connection to the New Year, the term *nianhua* becomes very problematic. Therefore terms like 'pictures', 'broad-sheets', 'layangpian' ('peep-show picture') etc. are used where appropriate.
The new configurations produced under these circumstances are three-fold. First, the historicized and ritualized narratives that were standard for domestic texts are developed as concrete events, people, and places, which possess identities independent of narrative and ritual. Graphically, the subject is drawn with stricter adherence to natural physical proportion and fixed point perspective, which sets it apart from earlier constructions more deeply informed by symbolic principles. Finally, the conditions for the presentation of print become public, to the extent that print begins to approximate (but not replicate) the role of the newspaper - a medium not for spreading knowledge of ritual and status, but a means of spreading knowledge of events and places.

I have argued in Chapters Two and Three that the image was subject to the physical setting and social environment, and that the printed image helped to define the social and cultural space in which it was displayed. I will continue that line of argument in a new context by examining how changes in the practice of viewing intersect with changes in the subject to be viewed. This brings together the social phenomena of the market and the temple-fair as they were transfigured by the introduction of trans-local marketing, the technology of the lens as an aid to viewing, and the development of a 'media' in rural China which connected 'event' to its representation as a printed image. The combination of these factors, considered in the context of continuing circulation of the ritual and ethical prints discussed above, demonstrates that the emergent visual culture of 'realism' did not eliminate older visualities based on ritual and ethics.

The question of how people looked at pictures (visuality) in pre-modern China has most recently been explored in Clunas' *Pictures and Visuality in Pre-modern China* (1997). In this volume, Clunas provocatively argues that among the many forms of visuality in pre-modern
China, the unschooled eye viewed the image mimetically.\textsuperscript{257} Clunas, however, is unable to provide convincing evidence of this, relying instead on such negatively constructed examples as a Ming dynasty painting that portrays an artist frightening village rubes with his terribly 'real' portrait of Zhong Kui.\textsuperscript{258} A more useful scholarly opinion, much closer to the time and place of the current discussion, also raises the question of mimesis as a mode of viewing. Expressing his opinion on nianhua reform through \textit{Jiefang Ribao (Liberation Daily)} in the spring of 1945, art critic Wang Zhaowen once noted that peasants considered it normal for nianhua figures to have a 'red face and big head' (as in representations of Guandi, from \textit{Romance of the Three Kingdoms}). This, Wang continues, was because antiquity did not have a concrete reality for people, and so people simply assumed that 'in the old days people looked something like that'. But for new nianhua that reflected contemporary reality, Wang claimed that peasants were much stricter in their aesthetic principles: "the shape of a sickle, the bodily proportion of a cow or goat...all have to be accurate", and therefore new nianhua had to be drawn 'realistically'.\textsuperscript{259}

Wang's statements must first be seen in the light of Mao's 1942 directives on using 'peasant' art forms, and of the early development of the politically motivated 'peasant realism' in Yanan. Whether or not people actually believed the historical hero to have 'big head and red face' is highly speculative. But if we cannot take Wang's comments literally, his suggestion that multiple modes of viewing co-existed within rural society is worth pursuing, and does have resonance in the wider body of village graphic print.

\textsuperscript{257} Craig Clunas \textit{Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China} 1997. In addition to mimesis, Clunas includes modes of seeing as \textit{kantu} 'see', \textit{guantu} 'contemplate, and \textit{dutu} 'read'.

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid, p. 120.

\textsuperscript{259} Wang Zhaowen 'Nianhua de neirong yu xingshi' \textit{Jiefang Ribao} May 18, 1945.
I have already outlined the conditions for one mode of viewing within the domestic space, arguing that certain images were seen in reference to the physical and ideological configurations of the home. These principles, however, are less able to account for the body of material produced by *nianhua* printers such as Yang Zhenshan, who substituted event for narrative or ritual, and drew the event with relative emphasis on the graphic reproduction of physical being. To analyse pictures of this nature it will be necessary to look to the social and cultural phenomena which happened outside the domestic space, and which were particular to the region and time in question. And while it was necessary to look to the influence of Paris to better understand Yang Zhenshan, for most levels of cultural change and exchange in village China we need look no further than the influence of the market-place and regional fair.

### 5.1 Reading the image in the marketplace

In Chapters Three and Four, the home was posited as the primary site of interpretation for the printed image. In the present discussion the primary organizing principle is the public market and temple fair. And because most images involved here are conspicuously of the early twentieth century, it is necessary to consider market and fair in the context of the expanding trans-local commercial interests and technological changes of that time. The context of the market and fair, therefore, is crucial to understanding the history of reading the images that occurred there.

Skinner's classic study of marketing and social structure posited the marketing community as an "intervillage system", which comprised the "chief tradition-creating and culture-bearing units of rural China".  

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artisans, merchants, and other full-time economic specialists, not peasants...sustained the heartbeat of periodic marketing that kept the community alive. It was priests backed by gentry temple managers, not peasants, who gave religious meaning to the peasant's local world. Clearly, then, in the case of the peasant's larger community at least, what we see...were not in any strict sense peasant communities.  

My earlier discussion of village handicraft production and marketing, and the cultural role of the home demonstrates a number of flaws in Skinner's argument. Especially problematic is the construction of the peasantry as a simple consumer of the culture made available to it by higher order systems. But while the centrality of marketing (or more specifically the marketplace and temple-fair) needs to be re-assessed, the role of the public market-place and temple fair in configuring and spreading awareness of events through printed representations should not be overlooked.  

The Sino-Japanese War of 1895-96, the Boxer Uprising of 1900, extensive railway construction, free-trade zones, and countless other developments in the late 19th and early 20th century involved North China, for better or worse, in global affairs and markets. As K.C. Yang's survey of markets in Republican era Shandong shows, the building of the railway and the impact of industrialism changed the economic organization of the entire region. But, Yang adds, "in this changing setting the system of periodic markets is still going strong". Yet 'entire' should not be interpreted as 'equal', since railways and other developments had much less impact on places like Caoxian in south-west Shandong, than they did on places like Weixian on the Jiaodong peninsula. If the market was a culture bearing unit, then differential market development must also have had a differential capacity to facilitate cultural change, and so there can be no simple

261 Ibid. p. 273.  
262 While Skinner admits that the social structure of the temple was "of scarcely less importance" than the market, he devotes only a single paragraph to the subject. See 'Marketing and Social Structure' Journal Asian Studies 24, 1964, p. 38.  
264 Weixian, for example, was developed for its coal mines, and as one of the most important tobacco growing regions for the rapidly expanding Shanghai based cigarette industry.
approach to connecting market with culture. For these reasons it must be stressed that this study
does not presume to account for cultural change across the entirety of North China, but maintains
focus on a set of villages that developed as cultural and commercial producers precisely because
of their relative market centrality.

Within these 'core' regions there is substantial evidence that periodic markets were very
active, and acted as an important venue for cultural exchange. In support of K.C. Yang's
observations, Martin Yang also describes the regional market for Taitou as very active, opening
in the town of Xinanzhen at five day intervals. On market day the town would become crowded
with merchants of all description, and at least one member of every local family would be in
town on that day. In addition to the periodic markets, Xinanzhen held two annual fairs that
drew people not only from local villages, but from neighboring communities and counties. So
while the market may have met people's daily needs, the fair had greater potential to promote
trans-local interactions, and to expose people to cultural texts that originated outside of the local
market region.

Because of banditry and government confiscation of temple land, temple-fairs were
probably in decline relative to their counterparts of the late Qing. But a Shandong survey shows
temple-fairs still to have been very active in the early 1930s. Boxing County, for example, had
thirteen annual fairs, while there were twelve in Linzi, and over seventeen in Jining. These fairs
were attended by as few as fifty, and as many as 10,000 people per day, with the largest, such as
the Zongde Fair at Jining's Longhua Temple, drawing as many as 70,000 visitors during its week
long celebration. So while we may not be able to judge whether fairs and markets were more or

266 Ibid p.191.
267 Shandong Miaohui Diaocha 1933, passim. Sidney Gamble also notes fairs of similar size and frequency in
less vigorous in the period following infrastructural and market expansion, it is apparent that in
the 1920s and '30s the periodic market and temple fair brought the local and trans-local
community together to conduct a wide range of social and professional activities, but more
frequently to simply kan re'nao (watch the fun).

Among the commodities marketed in this environment were pictures. The sale of nianhua
through the market was touched upon in an earlier section, although it was argued that the
primary site of viewing and interpretation of certain images was the home. But certain other
images had primary relevance to people, places, and events which occurred outside the home,
and were, as I shall argue, 'consumed' at the temple fair and market-place, and under the
influence of market specialists who sold both image and interpretation to their audience.

As will be demonstrated shortly, peddlers' jingles passed down through oral history can
give some of the flavor of how such images were marketed. A single photograph, taken by a
missionary in the west-Shandong town of Yanggu, also provides a rare glimpse into the
circumstances of propagation and interpretation of the picture through the market (fig. 5.2).
While the photo does not permit a clear look at the content of the picture (although apparently a
portrait), what is clear is that the sale of the picture combined peddler, story-teller, and
market-place into a venue for the propagation of graphically enhanced narratives. While this had
likely always been the case with nianhua, the introduction of event based narratives (narratives
that describe events that occur in the present, and in relation to a fixed place) brought new
configurations to the market. Unlike the New Year products, the commodity is not a ritual aid,
nor a moral tenet based on a mythical and transcendent past. Instead, the essence of the
commodity was the visualization of what has been defined here as 'reality'.

5.2 Liu Mingjie - a modern peasant?

Liu Mingjie (1857-1911) was a nianhua artist whose life stands out because he was personally involved in the trans-local marketing of his work when his home province of Shandong was thrust onto the front lines of foreign economic encroachment and armed conflict. Liu Mingjie's art stands out because it is the first known instance in which a Yangjiabu printer chronicled events of this nature. His case, therefore, offers insight into how the changing conditions of trans-local experience in the late Qing contributed to changing perceptions of graphic art as representing something beyond the ritual, ethical, narrative, and decorative configurations of Chinese domesticity.

Liu Mingjie's ancestors moved to Yangjiabu during the reign of the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662-1722), and established the Yihe printing workshop. By the time Liu Mingjie was born in 1857, the enterprise had split into North Yihe workshop and South Yihe workshop - to which Liu Mingjie was attached. The young Liu Mingjie was a prodigy in the skill of print-making - by age eight he could already draw, and by fifteen he had mastered the essentials of nianhua production. As a print maker, Liu is said to have become one of the top producing artists in Yangjiabu, with the widest range of styles and the most vivid content. But he also had a large family of three sons and one daughter, and so Liu found it necessary to supplement his income by making fans, which he sold as far as Tianjin.  

Around 1895 Liu broke with the standard forms of iconographic, dramatic and decorative nianhua when he produced a series of prints with titles like 'World Geography', 'World Rulers', 'A Tourist Map of Taishan' - some of which were done in the serial lianhuan style. Others incorporated political messages - one called 'Steamship' huolunban has not been located for this

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study, but a peddler's jingle has been recorded which tells about Admiral Ding Richang (1836-1895) and his officers aboard a steamship, smoke billowing from its stacks. Although no direct mention is made of any specific incident, the print likely refers to Ding's disastrous defeat at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Navy, and honourable suicide at Weihaiwei on the Shandong coast in 1895. 269

Two other prints, either or both of which may be accredited to Liu, were obtained by Komarov during his expedition to Manchuria in the late 1890s. These also follow the events of the Sino-Japanese War and are titled 'Blasting Japan'. In the first case (fig.5.3) the print adopts a layout typical of nianhua, complete with battle formations and martial poses reminiscent of the action prints of Romance of the Three Kingdoms and other adventure tales. The Qing forces, fighting under the personal banner of Song Qing (1820-1902), use an array of artillery and cavalry, including some unusual weapons labeled 'Steam powered guns, driving at high speed'. The Qing defenders mow down the Japanese aggressors who flee in confusion as their compatriots lie wounded and dying in the field. The 'Japanese', however, are drawn with extended noses and casual Western attire, while the 'Japanese' commander, wielding a weapon from Chinese antiquity, sports a bushy red beard. The antagonists are evidently European, although the regiment retreats under a banner plainly labeled 'Nation of Japan'. The second print (fig.5.4) is in similar form, but bears more text describing the figures involved and the military maneuvers. Unfortunately the characters are too obscure for a complete analysis, although the Qing regiments clearly fight under the banners of high ministers and military commanders

269 This and the following jingles are all found in Xie Changyi 'Yangjiabu Nianhua de Changmai', in Zheng Jinlan Weifang Nianhua Yanjiu 1991, pp. 100-108.
including Ding Richang, Li Hongzhang, and Song Qing. Further notes indicate that the invading army is not strictly Japanese, but made up of the 'soldiers of five countries'.

Liu's understanding of China's multi-national adversaries is uncertain, although a spike mounted on the helmet of one embattled foreigner suggests that of a Prussian field marshal. It is quite possible then that Liu either mistook the Germans (who began pressing for territorial rights in Shandong after anti-missionary disturbances at Yanzhou in 1895, seizing Jiaozhou in 1897) for Japanese, or else believed Japan to be allied with Germany and other unspecified powers. Both representations show that Liu did not interpret the defeat at the hands of the Japanese as being the result of Qing military incompetence, but as exactly the opposite. Whether this interpretation is the result of a local government propaganda sheet, or word of mouth, or simply an 'Ah Q' mentality, is uncertain. But in terms of public relations, the images demonstrate that the Qing had snatched one small victory from the jaws of a disastrous defeat by convincing a local artist to portray the event in a positive light.

But while the images provide only a confused insight into Liu Mingjie's vision of the Sino-Japanese war, the print can tell us exactly how the artist configured the event through graphic techniques. Like battle prints of Romance of the Three Kingdoms or Bandits of the Marsh, the characters in the background are the same size as those in the foreground, and are 'stacked' to give a sense of distance. The most important characters, Song Laoshi, Ding Richang, etc., are given precedence by making them much larger than the surrounding foot-soldiers. So in addition to the event's being organized through Liu Mingjie's particular knowledge of it, the

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270 Lu Xun's character Ah Q excelled at denying his personal humiliations by recasting himself as a righteous hero.
image is further influenced by the particular training of the artist, and his capacity to portray it as event. The result is an image deeply informed by the principles of nianhua drawing.

Several years later Liu Mingjie again responded to regional and national crisis through his interpretation of the Boxer Uprising. A print titled 'The Big Swords and the Boxers' may not be extant, but according to oral recollection it was marketed with the following verse, which suggests its content:

Big Swords, Boxers,
Burn foreign buildings, courting disaster,
The English Prince's defeated battle array,
Scheming in the purple bamboo grove.

While Liu's relationship with these associations is uncertain, Liu's familiarity with the Big Swords would at least have been informed by local experience - of which there is no shortage. In 1893 the Big Swords led uprisings in Changle and Weixian, and later reorganized as Yihequan ('Righteous Fists, i.e. 'Boxers') before adopting the title Yihetuan. Yangjiabu annals also report that the Big Sword Society had been active in the village in the last years of the nineteenth century. In the Spring of 1900, two brothers from nearby Shouguang County organized another branch of the Big Swords Society, which was suppressed by Shandong Governor Yuan Shikai. In that same year the Boxers arrived in Weixian where they attacked and burned out the Presbyterian's Ledaoyuan Academy. Liu Mingjie's work, therefore, appears to have a direct relationship to the local political situation.

Liu's prints also suggest that the Sino-Japanese War should be seen in relation to the rise of the Boxers. Joseph Esherick alludes to this in The Origins of the Boxer Uprising 1987; however his main points suggest only the role of the war in damaging Chinese military infrastructure and encouraging foreign incursion. To this we can add the effect of the war in creating prejudicial anti-foreignism.

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272 Xie Changyi 'Yangjiabu Nianhua de Changmai', in Zheng Jinlan Weifang Nianhua Yanjiu 1991, pp. 100-108. The last line is literally, 'using an abacus in the purple bamboo grove'. This is presumed to be an as yet undetermined reference to a deceitful character from a popular drama. The contemporary assumption that European royalty led their troops in battle against China is also seen in Liu Yuefu's abiding belief that he had killed the 'son-in-law of the French King' in the Battle of Sontay in Vietnam.

273 Weifang Shizhi 1993, pp. 21-22.
A Boxer print obtained by Alexeev in 1907 was very likely produced by Liu Mingjie (fig.5.5). And while it has become a favorite illustration for Boxer studies, the print is not simply a 'picture' of the uprising, and needs to be considered in relation to Liu's other work.\footnote{274}

Liu's Boxer print describes a scene which involves the foreign intruders, and associates them with a Christian church, likely the Northern Cathedral in Beijing, which was a foreign stronghold during the uprising. The fact that this resembles a country church rather than the twin spired cathedral, and the fact that it is decorated with the Daoist $yinyang$ icon, shows that the artist based his perception of the Beijing battles on local experience rather than first-hand knowledge.

The foreigners are in pitched battle with the Boxers who, as the banners indicate, are commanded by a prominently positioned Dong Fuxiang (1840-1908).\footnote{275} In the middle of the action several Boxers have fallen, but from the sidelines a Red Lantern maiden exerts her invulnerability magic to protect them from further harm. The peddler's jingle, possibly composed by Liu Mingjie's brother (the above mentioned Liu Minglun), praises the Boxers, and especially the military commander Dong Fuxiang:

\begin{quote}
Beat the drum, sound the bugle,  
Dong Fuxiang, proud in character,  
Leading men and horses, shouldering a rifle,  
At the vanguard are the Boxers,  
At the rear are the Red Lanterns,  
Beat them well, beat them good,  
The defeated devil's attack breaks down,  
Bright red cap on top of your head,  
Of all the officials under heaven, you are the best. \footnote{276}
\end{quote}

\footnote{274}{See Joseph Esherick \textit{The Origins of the Boxer Uprising} 1987 and Paul Cohen \textit{History in Three Keys} 1997}
\footnote{275}{Dong Fuxiang first gained recognition helping Zuo Zongtang suppress the Hui rebellions in Dong's home province of Gansu. In 1899 Dong moved to Beijing where he became involved against the foreigners.}
\footnote{276}{Xie Changyi 'Yangjiabu Nianhua de Changmai' p.101 in Zheng Jinlan \textit{Weifang Nianhua Yanjiu} 1991, pp.100-108. Xie identifies the print as being associated with 'Blasting Japanese Devils', although the reference to the 'Righteous Fists' associate it with the Boxers. It is entirely possible, however, that at the time the Boxers were conceived of as an anti-Japanese force.}
Like his prints of the Sino-Japanese war, Liu relied heavily on nianhua technique, dividing the battle into scenes by a convoluted boundary. But in this case the artist also manipulated perspective to divide foreground from background, and contrasted the much larger fortified Chinese city and Chinese forces with the diminished foreign church and armies. Under the charge of the Boxers both church and army appear about to be pushed off the edge of the page - a robust denial of the actual circumstances of the event.

Liu Mingjie's Boxer saga continues with the evacuation of the royal family from Beijing to Xi'an just before the foreign armies invaded Beijing to suppress the Boxers. Again, the print appears not to be extant, and we must rely on oral history for knowledge of its existence. On hearing that the emperor had abandoned the capital, Liu Mingjie decided that the emperor was worthless and took up his knife to cut a print depicting the Empress Dowager Cixi riding on a donkey as she fled to Xian with the Guangxu emperor. Liu Minglun then composed a jingle to introduce the print at the market 'The Guangxu emperor flees to Xi'an, dowager empress Cixi rides a donkey as fast as she can, in front of the commoners Guangxu is a 'true dragon', in front of the foreigners he is just like shit'. Naturally the print sold out almost immediately.

Hearing of this heresy, county officials sent a runner to order Liu to appear for interrogation at the Weixian Yamen, where he was likely due to undergo a severe beating for his impertinence. But according to local knowledge, Liu was able to disclaim his print and gain acquittal while insisting to the magistrate that the people of Weixian were respectful and would never get involved in printing such outrageous material. It is said that on returning home Liu Mingjie gave one copy of the offensive print to each of his neighbors, but asked them not to post it in public. The picture, therefore, probably was printed in only a single edition.\(^{277}\)

A final Liu Mingjie Boxer print, the only record of which survives in oral history, concerns Li Hongzhang and his negotiation of the 'Boxer Indemnities'. The peddler's jingle is recorded by Xie Changyi:

Li Hongzhang cherishes the pot of endless wealth,  
He is the 'living God of Wealth' of the Qing dynasty,  
Funding all the Generals in the land,  
Each day a million in gold passes through his hand,  
What the Generals need, he can send,  
As fast as it comes, the Generals can spend,  
In peace time all the soldiers are under control,  
The men and horses of the Allied Army are the oppressors,  
National Commander Song Laoshi,  
Dong Fuxiang, a great military man,  
Ma Sanyuan has his share of ability,  
Feng Tonglin is delegated to lead the armies forward,  
Silver is distributed among the Eight Armies.278

Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) refers to the governor of Zhili, who acted as chief negotiator after the Allied army forced their way into Beijing to suppress the Boxers. Song Laoshi refers to Song Qing (1820-1902), Ma Sanyuan is militarist Ma Yukun (7-1908), Feng Tongling is Feng Zicai (1818-1903), governor of Guangxi, Yunnan, and Guizhou who led troops against the French. The last line refers to the Boxer indemnities. Because of his great wealth drawn from numerous industrial enterprises, land-holdings, and other financial dealings, Li Hongzhang is called the God of Wealth. The author of the verse, moreover, expresses his knowledge that Li Hongzhang's boundless wealth translated into the minister's boundless power.

Given Liu Mingjie's tendencies for producing political nianhua, it is possible that he could also have become involved in the production of pro-revolutionary material. Living in Weixian he would have had plenty of opportunity, since in 1906-07 the Shandong Inland Public School in Weixian was a centre of revolutionary propaganda and activity.279 But after his

adventures during the Boxer Uprising Liu returned to more conventional practice, and there is no further evidence of political print being produced by him. Whatever his political views, Liu never saw the completion of the revolution. In 1911 he was accidentally killed while working in Yingkou, when a derelict temple in which he was sleeping collapsed in a storm.\(^{280}\)

Liu Mingjie's career was cut short, and the influence of his work in local context is uncertain. But his contributions to visual culture are the basis on which it may be argued that by the turn of the century, the North China village had begun to develop the idea that an 'event' could have a visual expression distinct from ritual and theatre. But although Liu Mingjie was aware of what was going on in the political environment, it would be very problematic to suggest that he produced art as the result of a developing consciousness of China's international political position. If we are to gain any insight into Liu's motivations, and appreciate the 'narrative' that it comprised, it is necessary to consider his work not only in the context of the \textit{nianhua} style which informed his work, but also in the context of the most likely venue for his art - which was the market-place and public fair.

5.3 Not Just Dirty Pictures: \textit{Layangpian} and Public Space

The Shandong survey of temple fairs does not deal with entertainment as thoroughly as it might have, but the compilers do write that temple fairs frequently included martial arts demonstrations, various forms of acrobatics, animal acts, and story-tellers. Most relevant to this discussion is the presence at the fair of 'amusing western pictures' (\textit{wan yangpian}), and various versions of the \textit{layangpian} (literally 'moveable western picture'- inaccurately translated as 'peep


\(^{280}\) \textit{Yangjiabu Cunzhi} 1993, p. 383.
Sidney Gamble’s survey of a temple fair in Dingxian contains more specific information on the *layangpian*, showing that among the dozens of stalls selling commodities like jewelry, noodles, furs and fertilizer, there were six *layangpian* alongside the ten fortune-tellers and five story-tellers. This suggests that by the late 1920s the *layangpian* had, in certain contexts, become as important to the propagation of narratives as the more widely recognized story-teller.

A 1950 introduction to Tianqiao, the old amusement quarter in Beijing, notes that in the late Qing/Republican era there were three kinds of attraction that fit the basic description of *layangpian*. These were the *dapian* (‘big sheets’, featuring *dahua* ‘big pictures’), *xihujing* (‘scenes of West Lake’), and the smallest version *xiaoxianghuo* (‘small paired images’). The aptly named *dapian* were approximately ten feet high and twenty to thirty feet across, containing twenty to thirty lenses. A man would stand inside with a pointer and explain the details of the elaborate painted picture to the audience, and the lenses were periodically changed to give a new visual effect. From its name *xiaoxianghuo* is likely the stereo-scope, which involved two pictures of the same object taken from slightly different points of view which, when seen through refractive lenses, appear as three dimensional. There is no description of *xihujing* except that they were smaller versions of *dapian*, and that there was no relation between the story being told and the picture on display. A better description of this type of apparatus can be drawn from photographic evidence. Photographs taken in a number of North China markets give a clear picture of how the...
apparatus operated, with one image being presented through the viewing lens, and another open for public viewing (fig.5.6). The 'open' image appeared 'free' to the casual viewer, but also served to attract a paying crowd to view the 'closed' image through the lens. By controlling the image in this way, the proprietor could subject it to special optical effects. Second, he could present images to his audience that were not suitable or desirable for open viewing. For the audience these controls offered novel perspectives, for the proprietor they offered new ways to profit from pictures.

According to Clunas, the optical lens has a long history in China, with telescopes and kaleidoscopes being under manufacture in Suzhou from as early as the seventeenth century. It is fairly evident, however, that these were the tools and toys of the elite, and not an amusement for the country markets of North China. The first known references to layangpian appear in the Tongzhi era (1862-1874) when the Tongzhi Dumen Jilu (Miscellaneous Notes on Tongzhi's Capital) tells of a device known as xiyangjing 'Western scenery'. Through the device, an informant writes, "a thousand li of mountains and streams come within one's grasp, jokes amuse old and young alike, pornographic pictures appear one after another". In 1878 a pious western observer wrote that in China "peep-shows are to be met with in almost every town. In Canton and other southern cities they are very small; in the central provinces they are very large, such shows being provided with ten or fifteen large circular peep-holes....Obscene pictures are, it is said, exhibited in these shows." Another description from the Guangxu era indicates that the

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283 Zhang Cixi Renmin Shoudu de Tianqiao 1951, pp. 206-07. The photograph (fig 5.6) is of a well known Beijing layangpian proprietor by the name of Luo Bulin, a.k.a 'Small Gold Tooth'. Another well known layangpian performer was Jiao Jinchi, a.k.a da jinya (Big Gold-tooth) from Hejian county, Hebei. Beijing Lao Tianqiao 1996, pp.28-29, 65.

284 Craig Clunas Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China 1997, p.132.


xiyangjing exhibited "scenery from west-lake, real mountains and real waters, foreigners shooting ducks, gold-miners in South Africa". In the Republican period, one informant indicates that while such images were then getting scarce, at one time the voyeur could add images of shop-lined Suzhou streets to the visual tour. He goes on to describe some of the context of the attraction, noting that it was accompanied by curiosities like 'a man dressed as a woman', and a boy reciting clapper rhymes. Finally, a Beijing observer writes that one local company had been using military pictures since around 1925, and that the narrators were masters of weaving picture and narratives together into a dramatic account. We may, therefore, be certain that various versions of layangpian were available in cities and regional centres throughout China by the 1890s, and that they had probably found their way into the larger rural markets and fairs by the 1920s.

But while both image and technology were initially imports, by its insertion into the atmosphere of the North China market and fair the layangpian took on a unique character. While it appears that photographs were often used to supply 'Western' images, the lack of photographic equipment in rural China provided the opportunity for local artists to fill in the 'Chinese' content through wood-block print. In the temporal and regional gap between the development of optics and the spread of photography and film, nianhua printers discovered a new niche as image suppliers for the layangpian industry. So while imported technology provided a structure for new forms of graphic art, a more literal interpretation of James Watson's theory on superscription can

288 Yanshi Jibi cited in ibid.
290 See Song Jiaheng, et.al. (ed) Lao Shandong 1996.
be invoked to show that local artists 'filled in' that structure with material most relevant to immediate needs.\textsuperscript{291}

The content of wood-block print representations designed for \textit{layangpian} will be discussed shortly, but first it will be necessary to explain how the 'public' image differed graphically from wood-block prints intended for viewing with the naked eye. The crucial differences exist both in content and in composition. In content, before the mid-19th century, all 'events' represented in village print were couched in historical fiction, drama, and myth. There are, for example, \textit{nianhua} depicting the historical establishment of the Ming dynasty, but instead of a sequence of events leading to a logical conclusion, the prints illustrate the personality cult of Zhu Yuanzhang (r.1368-98) and the legends surrounding his rise to power. Or in the case of Judge Bao, the hero was in fact a historical figure called to serve the Song court, but through \textit{nianhua} he is portrayed in the context of a mythical and miraculous intervention by Tianguan. Graphically, for \textit{nianhua} originating in rural Shandong, Hebei, or Henan, physical accuracy was less important than physical relativity that could be used to assign status or strengthen the expressive content of the print. The large heads of the Door Gods, for example, are given unnaturally large eyes, beards, and fierce theatrical facial paint to make them imposing figures. Relative proportion also supports narrative content by allowing the artist to overcome physical barriers and position to give equal physical presence to dramatic characters. In 'Gaoshan Liushui' (fig.5.7), for example, characters on opposite shores of the river appear equal in size, and in 'Hui Jingzhou' General Zhou Yu, despite being far-removed in the physical background, appears the same size as Liu Bei in the front (fig.5.8).

\textsuperscript{291} See page 22.
In 1895 Liu Mingjie could use techniques drawn from this narrative style to portray his version of the Sino-Japanese war. But by the time of Yang Zhenshan's return from Paris, the standards for printing the 'event' had changed, requiring the use of certain graphic techniques which had begun to emphasize principles of naturalistic proportion and fixed point perspective. This transition must be seen in the context of the late Qing expansion of the Chinese printing industry in general. Especially important were pictorial newspapers and tabloids such as *Dianshizhai Pictorial* and *The True Record*, cigarette cards (*xiangyan paizi*), and poster ads/calendars (*yuefen pai*). These media presented the imaginary world in previously not imagined dimensions, and the reproduction of those images and dimensions in wood-block print illustration is a strong indication of a shift, or development in historical awareness that the present had a narrative distinct from the past. Closely related to this is the idea that the present has a *visuality* distinct from antiquity. However, it must be stressed that through appropriation, emergent visualities and technologies of viewing were also influenced by existing understandings of what it meant to 'look at a picture'.

5.4 Sex, Violence, and City in Rural Print

The *Tongzhi Dumen Jilu* reference to the 'scenes from West Lake' in a Beijing *layangpian* includes a detailed description, based on the author's memory, of elaborate pictures of the streets of Suzhou seen through the viewer of the *layangpian*. This description, and the inclusion of Suzhou in the same description as 'foreigners shooting ducks' and 'gold-miners in South-Africa', gives some indication that the city, especially a city like Suzhou, had a reputation for exoticism. *Layangpian* images produced in rural society also indicate that this interest in the city extended
to rural Hebei. And it may be argued that what the rural locality found most fascinating about the city was the fairly obvious attribute of its architecture, but also the technology and gender relations of the metropolis.

Print makers did not use new graphic techniques to produce images of the mundane and local. Surrounded at the fair or market by exhibitionism of every description, the *layangpian* had to compete with imagery and demonstrations that were extreme, and even bizarre. It is fairly evident that one form of image which guaranteed a steady audience were the pornographic 'pictures of the spring palace' (*chungongtu*). Franck, visiting a Tai'an temple fair during Spring Festival in the early 1920s, described the open use by story-tellers of 'double-panel screens' exhibiting such things as large coloured photographs of 'women nude to the waist'. But for reasons of propriety and official puritanism, if any wood-block prints representing such subjects have survived in North China printing centres, they have not been made public. What has emerged from Wuqiang demonstrates that other popular subjects for representation were those which, in terms of physical or moral subject, were also external to immediate experience. As seen in Yang Zhenshan's depiction of Paris, from the view-point of rural North China it was often the 'city' that took on the dimensions of an exotic destination. But while several other pictures of Paris exist in North China wood-block print, it was Shanghai which gained the widest circulation. More than just a subject for representation, Shanghai also served as the conceptual space in which subjects like technology and gender could be imagined as alternatives to rural experience.

Shanghai was largely responsible for propagating its own fame and infamy through its own printing industry. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Shanghai based poster industry began to

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292 Harry Franck *Wandering in Northern China* 1923, p. 279.
develop in the late 19th century, appropriating nianhua iconography, introducing new subjects, and combining them in novel ways, such as in the decorative yuefenpai calendars. The term yuefenpai later became attached to an entirely new poster form in the early years of the Republic after Zhou Muqiao (?-1923) perfected a new painting style that was copied and applied, most famously, to cigarette advertisements. Occasionally these posters used scenes from antiquity and xiqu, but the great majority focus on the female form. As Carl Crow wrote in 1937, while these were produced as advertisements, they had a second incarnation as domestic art, with specialty shops in every large city reselling them for home decoration.\textsuperscript{293} But with no records of distribution, it is difficult to know how deeply these images penetrated the market-places and homes of the North China plain, although Smith's photographs from west Shandong show that advertising of this nature had penetrated relatively remote rural areas by the 1930s.\textsuperscript{294}

The effect of the yuefenpai on Gaomi nianhua can be seen in a ca.1925 puhui (carbon-black) nianhua by Shi Jingwen (fig.5.9). In this example, Shi Jingwen put his female figure in the position of mother, as rural Shandong ethics demanded, but gave her modern shoes, dress, and bobbed hair to bring her up to date with contemporary Shanghai fashion. While short hair and qipao were progressive in themselves, modern shoes, and especially the unbound feet within, would have caught the attention of a resident of rural Shandong, where not everyone accepted big feet as beautiful, and foot-binding was still a common practice. In a more 'traditional' note the woman is still portrayed in her primary capacity as mother to a chubby baby boy. But Shi Jingwen evidently did not produce the painting to represent a local Gaomi girl.

\textsuperscript{293} Carl Crow \textit{Four Hundred Million Customers} 1937, p. 65. Crow notes that one example of a cigarette advertisement for an American company sold 'readily' for 25 cents, a few cents more than the cost of production.

\textsuperscript{294} Song Jiaheng et.al. (ed) \textit{Lao Shandong} 1996, \textit{passim}.\vspace{10pt}
Rather, he reproduced an image of a modern Shanghai woman, in all likelihood passed on to him through the medium of the *yuefenpai*. The style change demonstrates that by 1925 the much older Gaomi industry of painting the female form was responding to new Shanghai fashion.

Most *nianhua* printers that engaged in urban representations were less concerned with copying Shanghai poster art than they were in portraying Shanghai as subject. 'A Real Picture of Sichuan Scenery' (fig.5.10) presents a scene corresponding to a Wuqiang artist's conception of what may be either Chengdu or Chongqing in the province of Sichuan, but is more likely Sichuan Road in Shanghai. Whichever the intended subject, the artist exhibits both a fascination with the city, and a respectable grasp of the complexities of colonial architecture. His interest in the electrical infrastructure is also sufficient that he allows light standards, telephone poles, and electrical wiring to obscure the buildings which he rendered in such detail. The technology theme is further supported by a street-car, an automobile, and a squadron of airplanes. Prominently placed within the arrangement are fashionably dressed and coiffed women who freely go about the street, shop, and ride in rickshaws. While the details of the composition are impressive, the most striking feature is the employment of the vanishing point to reproduce the effect of looking down the full length of Sichuan Road from an elevated point of view. Our interpretation of the image, however, would be incomplete if it were not recognized that this particular image was designed for use in the *layangpian*, which magnified the graphic effects. Second, the image was presented within the festive atmosphere of the temple-fair or higher level market, while the proprietor of

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296 In 1961 the printing blocks for this image were registered as in the possession of Zhang Sanxun from the village of Wangcun, Wuqiang County, although it is not known whether Zhang Sanxun was also the original designer of the image. See *Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua* 1996, p. 331.
the *layangpian* entertained the audience with a rude ditty, that may, or may not have been related to the image.

Although the maker of 'A Real Picture of Sichuan Scenery' stops short of placing his female subjects on bicycles or horses, one recurrent theme of 'cosmopolitan' wood-block prints is the configuration of the female form as being in motion and in relation to transportation technology.\(^{297}\) This is a definite departure from earlier *nianhua* which, if they bother to depict women at all, generally placed them within the home, in the role of mother, or more rarely in the role of professional performers. In the twentieth century this is extended, as suggested by 'A Real Picture of Sichuan Scenery', to the idea of the urbanized woman.

A print from Pingdu, 'Making Courtesy Calls at New Year' (fig.5.11), is an example of print which takes the New Year Festival as context in which to portray the female figure outside of the home and traveling by carriage. Dun Lichen provides an appropriate description of such an event as it transpired in Beijing:

> The fifth day of the month is called the *Po Wu*. Before this day it is not permitted to cook fresh rice...nor are women permitted to leave their homes. But upon the sixth day princesses and royal daughters, together with their entourage, put on their head-dresses and capes, and come and go, offering congratulations to one another. Also newly married women upon this day pay a visit to their parental homes. The vernal days are now mild, and the spring clay softens into slush. Gay carriages with their embroidered canopies block the lanes and fill up the big streets. And now, too, merchants of the market-places open their shops and begin business.\(^{298}\)

'Making Courtesy Calls at New Year' transfers the scene into print by placing a company of aristocratic women outside of the home and in command of a private carriage, which they employ in making their New Year rounds. The scene does not necessarily take place in the city,

\(^{297}\) The theme of 'girl riding bicycle' however, can be found in several *nianhua* prints from Mianzhu, Sichuan, and Yangliuqing.

\(^{298}\) Dun Lichen (Bodde trans.) *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, 1936, p.3.
and festival is represented as an occasion where social mores could be relaxed, and during which women could achieve relative mobility.

A scene from Wuqiang's Qingxuncheng workshop improves on the Pingdu carriage by giving women their own chauffeur driven car (fig. 5.12).\footnote{The car is a very early model, although given the capacity of print artists to include extemporal imagery, this does not prove the production date for the print.} The image is further enhanced by the appearance on the right of two fashionably dressed women standing outside a Western style house with a gas lamp over the door. Ironically it falls to the man of the house to comfort his children, frightened by the intrusion of the automobile, motor-boats and airplane, while the women boldly face the new technology. This scene is brought into context by the inscription that sets it not in the muddy streets of Wuqiang, or anywhere else in North China, but in Shanghai - the epitome of the cosmopolitan in Republican era China. Moreover, there is no suggestion that this scene is taking place on po wu or any other festival. As the Pingdu print uses festival to free women from social norms, the perpetually festive 'city' permits a similar inversion of gender norms in the sample from Wuqiang.

While Shanghai may have been a remote and fantastic place for the residents of rural Hebei, the imagery of Warlordism had a much more immediate reality for Wuqiang printers. Squarely situated on the coastal plain that connects Beijing with all points south, Wuqiang county has had the geographic misfortune to be the conduit and recruiting ground for many an army maneuvering for control of the strategic North China plain. But only in the early twentieth century is there evidence that local artists depicted any of these maneuvers in print.

Around 1905 an anonymous artist from Wuqiang designed an elaborate print titled 'Military Drills in Hejian' (fig. 5.13). The print represents the 1905 assembly in Hejian, fifty
kilometres north of Wuqiang, of two units of the New Armies, then under the command of Wang Yingkai and Duan Qirui. While the subject is important to our understanding of what news-worthy items found their way into vernacular print, the composition of the print is also an important indication of the development of a new form of representation. Although the figures at the front and back of the picture are basically the same size, the artist arranged the columns of soldiers so as to approximate the line of sight that one would have if they were looking down on the scene. This, along with the size of the print (over 1 metre in length) suggests that the print was not designed to be handed out in the marketplaces of south-Hebei, but for use in a layangpian or similar device. Although the maker of the print incorporated this graphic technique in one part of the image, the same standards are not applied to the cavalry that are front and centre in the composition. Neither has the artist applied the laws of proportion to the image by reducing the size of the individuals in the back relative to those in front. As in ritual nianhua the most important people in the composition, presumably Wang, Duan, and high commander Yuan Shikai, are the largest figures in the picture, despite their being furthest from the theoretical viewpoint.

Some years later, after the fall of the Qing, Wuqiang's Qingxuncheng workshop produced a print of the Japanese aggression against the German defenders of colonial Qingdao (fig. 5.14). The presence of the print in the village indicates the propagation in rural China of the news that Japan had relieved Germany of its control over Qingdao. This news then also presumes the fore-knowledge that Germany had, until that point, been in control of Qingdao. Compared with Liu Mingjie's vivid, but confused understanding of the relationship between Germany and Japan, these works demonstrate a tangible development in the dissemination of information through
rural North China. It may be added that developments in technical drawing had further enhanced the artists ability to portray the event - as seen both in the manipulation of spatial relations to represent distance and in a somewhat prescient portrayal of airplanes. As Wang Shucun suggests, this image was also intended for use in the layangpian and so would have been observed in the context of market or fair, and magnified by a lens.300

The Qingxuncheng artist's hand can be discerned in another layangpian composition - 'Southern and Northern Armies Battle in Tiananmen' (fig. 5.15). This print depicts the ill fated attempt of the Qing loyalist Zhang Xun (known as the 'pigtail general' for his refusal to remove his and his soldier's queues) to reinstate Puyi as emperor in 1917. The restoration ended after a few days following an air-raid on the Forbidden City, and the suppression of the movement by Feng Yuxiang on orders from Duan Qirui. Again, the artist has a good grasp of architecture, and perspective has been much improved over earlier nianhua. Yet the artist has not had the professional training to justify all of the angles. Like Liu's print 'Beating Japan' this print features several martial figures, including Zhang Xun, striking a pose reminiscent of martial theatricals.

'Peace Conference of the New Tongmeng Army' can be credited to this same artist, and dates from 1921 (fig. 5.16). The event which gave rise to the print was a 1919 Shanghai summit between the representatives of Sun Yat-sen's Guangzhou based Tongmenghui (Revolutionary Alliance, soon to be reorganized as the KMT), and the Beijing based provisional government.301 The flags flying over Shanghai represent the five-barred flag of the provisional government, the officers on horseback arrive under the army flag of Sun Yat-sen's Tongmeng Army. That the bottom bar of the provisional government flag is accurately coloured black suggests that this

300 Wang identifies this and other images under discussion here as Xiyangjing (Western lens) pictures in Zhongguo Minjian Nianhua Shi Tulu 1991, pp. 672-667.

301 The representatives were Tang Shaoyi from Guangzhou and Zhu Qiling from Beijing.
print was intended to be printed in colour, and raises the possibility that the other examples in
this series were also intended to be polychrome. Unlike his other prints, the artist adds
commentary with the words: Rich country, strong army, China is great, people praise the
forthright leader, and Tongmeng are like brothers, agreeing to a treaty that will protect the
country- Spring, 1921.' Although this example does not use the 'vanishing point' technique to the
same effect as earlier examples, the positioning of buildings at a distance in the background gives
the optical effect of depth which the lens could exaggerate for a greater effect.

The partner to this print - 'Talented Women in the Garden of Shanghai's Bajiao Pavilion'
(fig. 5.17) illustrates the activities of the women's branch of the Revolutionary Alliance. In
contrast to the weighty matters of state in which the men engage, the women are shown relaxing
and playing in the garden of the Bajiao Pavilion. The inscription removes any doubt about their
perceived role at the summit:
Sisters of the Revolutionary Alliance playing in the garden,
Enthusiastically touring among the exotic flowers and plants,
They cavort in the Bajiao Pavilion,
With satisfied hearts they giggle loudly.
Riding four horses they perform with great skill,
The one in front stands acrobatically, the veteran behind 'dives in the sea',
The joyful play fills the garden with the sound of cheers,
The sister's performance is like a picture,
They celebrate New Year with honour and fortune.

Since most of these images originate with a single studio in Wuqiang county, if seen as a
simple progression they may represent the growing sophistication of the studio artists' command
of graphic technique. They may also demonstrate the acquisition of the learned capacity to
connect graphic representation with changing social phenomena as pertained to city, technology,
war, and gender. It would, however, be a mistake to equate this development as formative of a
literal 'consciousness' of citizenry and complicity in political change. First, the addition of precise
dates on those prints involving the Revolutionary Alliance (5.16, 5.17) shows that the 'news' of the event was not carried into the rural market through this medium until eighteen months after the actual event. Second, by that time the prospect of North-South unification had already been shattered by the beginning of the Zhili-Anfu War in 1920. So while these prints concern events, they are not 'newspapers' that are only relevant to contemporary event. Because they had visual appeal they could remain relevant beyond the immediate time-frame of the event, and likely continued in circulation long after the event had passed. A final, and crucial consideration is that the images were probably exhibited in a variety of formats, including the layangpian which could randomly include the image in a show involving 'gold miners in South-Africa' and 'pornographic pictures'.

5.5 The Broadsheet

While a substantial proportion of the prints depicting contemporary events and places were designed for use in the layangpian, by no means did the device monopolize the presentation of event in print. It cannot be stated categorically that the following prints were never used in layangpian (nor for that matter can it be categorically stated that the above were never used outside layangpian). But the composition suggests that their use in layangpian would provide no advantage other than concealment. The comparatively rough drawing, the absence of most of the graphic techniques seen in the above, and the relatively compact dimensions, suggest that they were produced as simple broadsheets for distribution by market specialists. While most of the prints seen here appear only in black outline, the bottom bar on the flag of the provisional

302 This could be the result of what county annals describe as a disastrous three years between June of 1917, when the entire county was flooded, and drought in 1920. See Wuqiang Xianzhi 1996, pp. 140-146.
government is again accurately coloured black, so we can reasonably assume that in their original form these prints were polychrome. The product, therefore, was not just a quick knock-off designed to carry the news, they were was also intended to appeal to the eye.

The city of Shanhaiguan has been a key strategic pass on the Great Wall since antiquity, making it the host of countless battles throughout history. This situation had changed little by the Warlord era, and so the precise incident which inspired 'Battle of Shanhaiguan' (fig. 5.18) is hard to determine. But in all likelihood the print refers to the Shanhaiguan Campaign of the Second Zhili-Fengtian War when Wu Peifu attempted to isolate Zhang Zuolin in Manchuria by blockading the pass at Shanhaiguan. On Sept. 19, 1924 Zhang Zuolin's airplanes began to drop bombs on the city of Shanhaiguan, and on Sept. 25 it was reported that one had destroyed Wu's headquarters in a local hotel. Undeterred, the Zhili forces held the pass against a concentrated attack by Zhang's Fengtian Army during the first week of October. An eye-witness account tells of how the battle came to a head on the morning of October 6th:

the Fengtian forces attacked using two mixed brigades - perhaps more. The Zhili forces opened fire, but the enemy kept drawing closer and closer, with more and more reinforcements drawing up. Finally the Zhili forces "spent their last energy, with bullets and grenades flying, and closed to fight with bayonets, whereupon the enemy gradually weakened and withdrew." On October 8 Fengtian attacked again with "dare to die squads" of more than 1,000 men each. But the Zhili had reserves and managed to hold and strengthen their position.303

The ability of the printed broad-sheet to bring such an 'eye-witness' account to a secondary audience is limited. The print itself is certainly action packed, but to the casual viewer there are few visual cues which identify the participants, or indicate who won the battle. There is also no way to know that a miraculous breakthrough by the Fengtian army at Jiumenkou changed the nature of the battle at Shanhaiguan from a straightforward defense to a pitched battle in which

Wu Peifu seemed destined to prevail. Nor could the viewer know that just as Wu Peifu seemed set to press his advantage, Feng Yuxiang broke ranks and marched on Beijing, arresting the president and proclaiming a new government. As in their layangpian counterparts, the image needed interpretation by the professional who sold both picture and story in the market-place.

A second battle which provided subject matter for a broad-sheet was the 'Battle of Luanzhou' during the Second Zhili-Fengtian War (fig. 5.19). Like 'Battle at Shanhaiguan' this print could refer to one of several incidents involving the north-east Hebei railway city of Luanzhou, but is probably the battle of 1924 which Waldron refers to as a key link in the 'turning point' in China's road to nationalism. When Feng Yuxiang spoiled Wu Peifu's 'national unification' scheme, Wu returned to Tianjin to begin organizing for a two-front defensive against Zhang Zuolin in the north and Feng in Beijing. Seeing an opportunity to join the fray, Zhang Zongchang and Li Jinglin moved from the north-west, down the Luan River to Luanzhou. There they splintered the Zhili Army and with Hu Jingyi occupied Luanzhou on Oct. 27, 1924. This maneuver isolated Wu Peifu at Tianjin, allowing Zhang Zuolin's Fengtian Army and Feng Yuxiang's Guominjun to attack at Shanhaiguan and Qinhuangdao. Wu Peifu's only option was a naval evacuation to the south.

Given the similarities in composition and style, this was likely produced in the same work-shop as 'Battle of Shanhaiguan', where it would have been a simple matter to alter the inscription on the first print, and reissue it as 'Battle of Luanzhou'. But the fact that this was not done demonstrates the perceived need to satisfy a discerning clientele who followed events through the printed media, and perhaps even collected them as a series.

Ibid. pp. 185-86.
A final broad-sheet (fig. 5.20) of the Warlord era brings us to 1926, by which time Feng Yuxiang had resigned and appointed Zhang Zhijiang to his former position. Lacking supplies and under threat from Li Jinglin in Shandong, from Wu Peifu in the south, and from the Zhang Zuolin in the north, the Guominjun retreated to Beijing and then on April 16 to Nankou Pass, north-west of the capital. There, 90,000 Guominjun troops held their ground against a much larger allied force for five months before being forced out to the west.\textsuperscript{306} The print clearly shows the Guominjun occupying high ground in the Nankou Pass while the allied soldiers assault their position with artillery and airplanes. Several factors indicate that this image was produced by a different artist than the above, most telling being the misrepresentation of the flag of the provisional government, and a weaker concept of technical drawing, as seen in the clumsy depiction of airplane, railway, and cannon. The style of representing foreground and background also reverts to the norm for older narrative \textit{nianhua}. But in this respect, the artist also appears as a master of the \textit{nianhua} technique, and fills his print with the more highly stylized attributes of the mountains, foliage, and water. The printer thus rejects most of the graphic techniques that some of his colleagues had been using for as long as two decades, and demonstrates that in that time \textit{nianhua} techniques had not been categorically rejected as a medium for representing event.

The confluence of these simple products, and the graphically complex \textit{layangpian} within the same county, perhaps even the same work-shop, shows that while print designers understood the use of certain graphic techniques, they did not find it necessary to apply them in every situation. The 'flat' and spatially undifferentiated image was still acceptable for the broad-sheet, which was not expected to replicate 'reality' in the same way as the \textit{layangpian} pictures produced by Qingxuncheng. Nonetheless, the broadsheet was still designed to transport the 'view' of the

\textsuperscript{306} Ibid. pp. 189-92.
battle to people removed from the scene, but like the *layangpian*, it was a 'view' that could only be completed through the intercession of the storyteller.

These *layangpian* and broadsheet prints are remarkable for several things. First is the chronicle of many of the key events in North China between the fall of the Qing dynasty and reunification under the KMT. But it is just as important to note what is not represented - there are, for example, no representations of the extensive Warlord campaigns in China's south. And despite extensive coverage in urban media, there is no mention of the Twenty One Demands, the Treaty of Versailles, the Tiananmen Incident of 1919, the May 4th Movement, May 30th Movement of 1926, or the Jinan Incident of 1928. Even more to the point, there is no hint of Sun Yat-sen or Chiang Kai-shek in any of the Wuqiang prints.  

Although warlord prints were marketed across the north, the print market cannot be considered 'national' in scope, and with the exception of the Qingdao and Shanghai events, the chief interest of the printer is with incidents which happened in Zhili (Hebei). The Wuqiang printers also continued to print war as they saw it, with no clear reference to any political change - the prints of 1926 and 1928 having no more or no less political commentary than the prints of 1924 or 1917. So while there was potential for nationalism and other forms of political activism in rural China, it existed at a much different level than what can be seen for Shanghai or Beijing of the same period. This supports Waldron's argument that nationalism did not develop until after the 'chaos of war' (*hunzhan*) ended in the late 1920s.

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307 The images of Sun and Chiang were produced on posters in Shanghai, but they do not appear in the *nianhua* genre as it has been described here. See Riftin 'Zhongguo Nianhua Zai Eguo' *Historical Monthly*, 1995 (2), p.11 for an example of a calendar print from Shanghai including all the political figures of 1912, including Puyi as 'Emperor of China.'

308 see Arthur Waldron *From War to Nationalism* 1995, p. 433.
So ruling out 'proto-nationalism' as a motive, these images have to be evaluated first in terms of the theatrical qualities given them by the circumstances of their public presentation, and second in terms of the personal experience of people who experienced war first-hand. Rural Hebei was a society embedded in militarism, with the countryside serving as a warlord battle-ground, and the market-places serving as warlord recruitment centres.\textsuperscript{309} The presence of the warlord battle image in these same markets shows that while print could help to visualize the remote (i.e. Paris or Shanghai), it could also help to visualize an event that happened in a more immediate space and time. The role of the print in forming 'consciousness' is less important than its role in forming imagination.

The second remarkable thing about these prints is that while there is a relatively coherent progress in the chronicle of North China warlord politics, there is no equally coherent progress in the development of graphic styles. While the production from Qingxuncheng is relatively consistent, the creators of most remaining military prints ignore the perspectives which technologies like layangpian demanded. Moreover, the nianhua style that one would logically expect to have declined under the introduced graphic regimes of pictorial magazines and photographic peep-shows actually stages a recovery in one later production.

This then raises the question of how the resilience of older standards of looking configured the understanding of war, and whether the visualization of war as having a narrative independent of antiquity was involved in visualizing the conditions of nationalism. If so, how did the image influence the understanding of the nation? Benedict Anderson's opinions on the spread of print capitalism and the rise of nationalism are well known, and he is certainly correct to say that print was involved in the production of nationalism.\textsuperscript{310} But as the evidence presented here

\textsuperscript{309} Diana Lary \textit{Warlord Soldiers} 1985, p. 22.
demonstrates, print cannot be seen as moving in a trajectory toward any definitive goal, but rather stands as a confused mixture of emergent and residual imagery. Any attempt to extract a message of nationalism, modernism, or any other form of 'consciousness' would be a distortion of the wider scope of the material.

The question which I raised initially was whether Liu Mingjie was a 'modern peasant' because of his capacity to break away from iconography based on the spiritual and ethical worlds based on antiquity, and to branch out into representations of the contemporary and cosmopolitan. The logical extension of that question is to ask whether the North China village was itself becoming modern in providing a market for such images. The answer, as with most questions of 'modernity', is yes and no. Yang Zhenshan, Liu Mingjie, and their counterparts in Pingdu and Wuqiang did make, and their clientele did consume prints that contrasted sharply with older styles of representation. However it is not valid to say that there was a sharp social or cultural break with the past which resulted in village 'modernity' that prompted Liu to make Boxer prints, or Qingxuncheng to chronicle warlord militarism. Rather, North China artists were productive links in social movements that were translated into text and distributed through extensive trading networks. Trans-local interactions were integrated into the systems of representation native to Yangjiabu, Pingdu, and Wuqiang, and the response was based on formulations of that type. To 'look at a picture' meant to see things in terms of the Chinese narrative tradition, which formed the structural background against which social change was observed and represented.

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310 see Benedict Anderson Imagined Communities 1983, especially pp. 37-46.
6) The Politics of the Popular

History shows that successful Chinese regimes have invariably gone to extreme lengths to favourably situate their authority within dominant belief systems, and to appropriate prominent cultural symbols and ideologies in support of their mandate. In *Culture, Power, and the State* (1988) Duara argues that the Chinese Republic failed in this respect because it ignored established cultural texts, and attempted to transfer local power from culturally legitimate lineage and religious organizations to culturally illegitimate political cadres. The consequence was an increasing reliance on coercion, and eventually a complete devolution of power to 'entrepreneurial state brokers'. Duara over-states the role of the Republican government in enforcing such reforms by design, since in most areas of China, cultural and administrative matters were in the hands of Warlord governments which did not place a high priority on cultural and social reform. But Duara's point that Republican era authority, KMT or otherwise, failed to position itself favorably within the ritual and narrative structure of the society is still valid. With no legitimate claim to patronage of the cultural texts through which social control had historically been exerted, there was little potential to achieve social control through means other than coercion. And with an equally weak system of policing, coercion was just as likely to fail. The first part of this chapter will contribute to the understanding of this failure through the study of late-Qing and Republican era *nianhua* reforms.

A related problem that has received little attention concerns how, and if, the CCP made use of residual cultural forms to legitimate its own authority. It is often assumed that there was a sharp break between the iconography of the People's Republic and the residual iconography of late imperial/Republican China. Of course this is technically true; the communists did not, for
example, reinstate Guandi as the God of War as Yuan Shikai had done in the early Republic. But a closer examination of CCP sanctioned *nianhua* production demonstrates that CCP affiliated artists consciously adopted residual iconography as a 'national form' in the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, as a putative 'peasant revolution', the CCP actually placed unprecedented importance on popular symbolism, and the media forms through which it was carried. This is borne through in the fact that Maoist China also had unprecedented (although not unmediated) success in suppressing those same symbols. And yet, as I argued in the introduction, not even the most ardent program of cultural proscription is capable of narrowing the field of discourse to a single interpretation, with the effect that *nianhua* continued in circulation until the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, and have returned in post-Mao China as transfigured, but still highly relevant cultural forms.

6.1 *Nianhua* and the late-Qing/Republican State

The evidence from *nianhua* proves Duara correct when he suggests that the 'cultural nexus' was a source of rural stability and social control even during times of weak or absent government. This can be seen in the continued circulation of Confucian, imperial, and otherwise paternalistic themes throughout the decline of the imperial system, and well after its official demise. But if, as Duara argues, the Republican state had sought to transfer the authority of this nexus to Republican cadres, then there should be evidence that material like *nianhua* had been reformed and replaced with politically relevant material. There is scattered evidence that some *nianhua* were technically proscribed and that statist or reformist material was on occasion substituted, but these were not KMT projects, and the scope and intensity of these programs was
so limited as to have almost no lasting effects. However, we should consider how late Qing reformers, the KMT, Republican era academics, and even Warlord governments, attempted to deal with nianhua and the themes which they contained. Their actions and opinions are important not because of their effects (which were minimal), but because their actions and opinions expressed the same intent to apply popular imagery to modern political movements that would be expanded with real effect in the following generation.

In the early twentieth century Peng Yizhong, founder and editor of the vernacular Chinese journal Jinghua Ribao, commissioned Yangliuqing's Qijianlong workshop to produce a series of prints illustrating morality tales and political themes written in vernacular language. These included such titles as 'Equality between Manchu and Han' (manhan pingdeng), 'Girls Ask for Education' (nuzi qiuxue), and 'Breaking Superstition' (pohuai mixin). That such initiatives were not supported by the Qing government is demonstrated by the fact that the journal was banned in 1906, and Peng exiled to Xinjiang.\(^{311}\)

A rare insight into how the reform was received in Beijing can be seen in a 1940 visitor's guide to the city, written by an author with the pen-name Nilu Guoke. In a general introduction to nianhua the author writes that Peng Yizhong once thought he could promote education through reformed nianhua, but was mistaken to think that reform could be expressed through an image in which "girl students all had small feet, and wore American style hats and bandannas".\(^{312}\) While the bias of what was then the presiding Japanese puppet-government must be taken into consideration, the reference is interesting first for the fact that Peng Yizhong's reform movement was remembered at all, and second for the fact that it was remembered as a failure. This suggests

\(^{311}\) Wang Shucun, Meishu Yanjiu 2, 1980, p. 15.
\(^{312}\) Nilu Guoke, Dushi Congtan 1940, pp. 58-59, in Beiping Difang Yanjiu Congkan 1969.
that while reformed nianhua material achieved recognition in Beijing, it was not received as its promoter would have hoped.

The picture to which Dushi Congtan refers is probably 'Drilling at a Girls' School', or at least one of similar form, that would have appeared before the closure of Jinghua Ribao in 1906 (fig. 6.1).313 The print, therefore, is likely intended to represent the Shanghai based Patriotic Girls' School where, after becoming principal in 1904, Cai Yuanpei is supposed to have introduced bomb-making, nihilism, and the French Revolution to the curriculum.314 The production of 'Drilling at a Girls' School' may also have been supported by the example of the female revolutionary Qiu Jin. While living in Tokyo, Qiu famously adopted bomb-making, shooting, and horse-back riding as extracurricular activities, while making regular contributions to the Tokyo based Chinese language The Vernacular Journal (Baihua Bao).315 Whether or not Cai and Qiu actually encouraged rifle practice for girls is less important than the idea that they may have done so. As a vernacular language journalist and political activist, Peng Yizhong would certainly have been acquainted with the ideas of both the Patriotic Girls' School and Qiu Jin through The Vernacular Journal and The National Gazette- which became the primary literary vehicle for reform after the decline of Subao. The idea of martial training for female students, therefore, was within reformist discourse, and Peng Yizhong would have commissioned the print with the intent of promoting educational reform.

The theme of women's martial training reappears some years later in the Qingxuncheng workshop of Wuqiang as 'A Picture of Training at a Girls' School' (fig. 6.2). No precise date for

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313 While this is not normally associated with Peng Yizhong's project, there is nothing to suggest that it was not commissioned by Peng Yizhong. It is also possible, since there is no mention here of holding rifles, that the author refers to a similar image no longer extant.
its production is available, although considering certain similarities to the clothing and facial structure of the women in the 1921 'Talented Women in the Garden of the Bajiao Pavilion in Shanghai' (fig. 5.17), we may reasonably assign the work a date of ca.1920. Seen in this context, it can also be assumed that the makers of 'A Picture of Training at a Girl's School' saw the martial ability of the heroines in the same light as those of 'Talented Women in the Garden of the Bajiao Pavilion'. In this case women expend their martial abilities not in saving the country, but in amusing each other with their skills.

At some point, the theme was also appropriated by Yangjiabu's Gongmao workshop, although with an additional inscription describing the image as 'Training in a Tianjin School' (fig. 6.3). While the Yangliuqing and Qingxuncheng versions portray their heroines with small feet, they are also shod (as Nilu Guoke adds) in 'American style boots' \(^{316}\) Gongmao, on the other hand, altered that particular aspect of the image by substituting embroidered shoes and by making the feet impossibly small and, presumably, sexually alluring.\(^{317}\)

Assuming that 'Drilling at a Girl's School' did originate with Peng Yizhong, then the print was originally intended to carry a reformist message, and to promote women's physical education. Material of this nature may have had some practical effect, since the Qing Ministry of Education did promulgate its first set of regulations governing girl's schools in 1907. But the Ministry of Education also stipulated that girls should be trained as 'virtuous mothers and good wives' \(xianmu\ liangqi\). Needless to say, the Ministry of Education did not approve of martial training for girls.\(^{318}\) By the time Qingxuncheng and Gongmao issued their versions of the image, the drive for women's education had been strengthened by Republican reforms. Yet by the 1920s,


\(^{317}\) The proprietor of Gongmao at the time was likely Yang Shuxiang.

\(^{318}\) Paul Bailey *Reform the People* 1990, p. 115.
girls' education was still far from comprehensive, and the majority of the (still small) student
body were attending classes in the major urban centres. Most provincial localities were still years
away from establishing girl's schools - Wuqiang did not establish one until 1931.319 Moreover, in
what few schools that were available, the instruction was predominantly Christian, or as Buck
has shown for boy's education in Shandong of the same period, still deeply Confucian.320

With little actual education for girls in most localities, prints like 'A Picture of Drilling in
a Girl's School' could hardly be expected to carry a reformist message. To the contrary, if we
trace the spread of the image from Yangliuqing through Wuqiang and Yangjiabu, through its
various graphic appropriations and through the situations in which it was viewed, the original
image becomes altered, and even sexualized by provincial artists who repackaged it for
commercial exploitation. In certain contexts, these prints could have been produced and
circulated as evidence of a progressive China where, as Tanya MacIntyre suggests, they defined
women as "acceptable defenders of culture and nation... (and) strategic thinkers on national
issues".321 But considering the weakness of the revolution and social reform in the first part of the
twentieth century, the image of the feminist revolutionary was just as likely to take its place
alongside images of new technology, urban vistas, and French palaces as objects of fantasy rather
than evidence of real reforms. While an expansion in print capitalism could be used to promote
new freedoms for women, it could also objectify women in entirely new and novel ways. As
Perry Link argues in the case of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly school of literature, print and
publishing could serve the dual purposes of nation building (which statesmen and political
reformers would have preferred), and pleasure and profit (the purpose to which it was often

320 David Buck 'Educational Modernization in Tsinan' The Chinese City Between Two Worlds 1974, p. 211.
applied). As was the case with reform literature, there was a discontinuity between the efforts of
reformers to direct a mass culture through print propaganda, and the public's willingness to
accept it.

In 1913, as part of a broader campaign to reform theatre and popular literature, the Zhili
Education Inspector reported that 6,000 nianhua had been collected in Fengrun (a town near
Dongfengtai), Wuqiang, and Tianjin, and appraised either as 'banned for sale' (jin shou) or 'held
temporarily' (zancun). In addition, the department ordered fifty forms of 'improved' (gailiang)
nianhua to be printed at local workshops. Because of the expense involved, these were intended
not for mass production, but only as models for the voluntary reform of nianhua. One of the
artists involved in this project was Yangliuqing printer Wang Zhaotian, who provided titles such
as 'Breaking Superstition', as well as 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf,' and 'The Fox and the Crane',
based on Aesop's fables. A later report notes that the Tianjin Social Education Office
maintained its surveillance of the Yangliuqing market by organizing a Nianhua Inspection Unit
which conducted annual checks on the nianhua workshops. Similar inspections and reforms
were ordered in Shaanxi, where the local nianhua were criticized as 'absurd and despicable', and
Beijing where the Popular Education Research Association, in association with Beijing police,
had appraised 780 forms by 1917.

Most reforms of this nature were dampened by the virtual collapse of the Republican state
during the Warlord Era. Reform did not resurface until 1928 when the new Ministry of the

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322 Perry Link Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies, 1981.
323 'Shicha Diyichu (Zhi, Feng, Ji, Hei) Xuewei Zong Baogao (Zhili Bufen)', 1913, in Shu Xincheng (ed)
Zhongguo Jindai Jiaoyu Shi Ziliao 1, 1961, pp. 312-315.
324 These images can be found in Zhongguo Minjian Nianhua Shi Tulu 1991, and in Wang Shucun Xiandai
Meishu Quanji 1998. There is also indication that Liaocheng nianhua were proscribed by the Warlord
325 Jingji Banyue Kan 1(3) 1927, p. 30.
326 Paul Bailey Reform the People 1990, p. 191.
Interior began to proscribe much of the cultural basis for *nianhua* print by attacking popular religion and confiscating local temples. One pamphlet issued by the Zhejiang Provincial government outlined the criteria for discrimination between particular gods, sages and creeds. Deities to be retained included members of the 'philosopher group', including the deified 'Sage Kings' of ancient China, Confucius, and Mencius. Among the religions, those to be retained included only Buddhism (Sakyamuni only), Daoism (Laozi only), 'Mohamedanism', and Christianity; and some state sponsored icons like Guandi as the God of War. Gods to be discarded under the KMT policy included all 'stellar and celestial gods', earth gods, atmospheric gods, gods of the harvest (with the exception of the Sage King Shen Nong), and the whole pantheon of minor and demi-gods associated with money making, animism, and legend. The most notable of these expulsions included the God of Wealth and the Kitchen God. The statement ends with the recommendation that all associated temples be "razed to the ground so that nothing remains."\(^{327}\)

Other references note that the Kitchen God was sanctioned by the state, but while this appears to refute Day's evidence, it really only demonstrates the confusion and inconsistency of the abortive campaign.\(^{328}\) Even as late as 1935, Sidney Gamble noted that although numerous temples had previously been confiscated by the county magistrate, "there seems to have been no serious effort to enforce [the ban on popular religion] in North China."\(^{329}\) This is further demonstrated by the notation in *Hebei Yuekan* (1936) of a profusion of 'paper horse' which could still be found in Beiping and Tianjin, where one would expect policing to be at its strictest.

\(^{327}\) Clarence Day, *Chinese Peasant Cults* 1974b, p. 143. Day notes that the pamphlet was to be forwarded to the central government for redistribution throughout the provinces.


Farther south, Zhong Jingwen also remarks that while it was difficult to find paper-horse and *nianhua* in the city of Hangzhou, the art researcher Shi Shizhen collected 3,000 samples in the villages of Zhejiang and Anhui in the mid-1930s.\(^{330}\)

A more intensive reform activity of the 1930s was the New Life Movement. The official report on the activities of the New Life Movement in 1935 is not specific about the type or distribution of graphic print, but lists posters among the publications produced as New Life propaganda.\(^{331}\) Xie's evidence from 1936 shows that educational prints associated with the movement were to be found in the Baoding market. Along with traditional *nianhua* such as '24 Filial Sons', 'Continuity in Honourable Sons', 'Five Sons Fight for the Crown', etc., there were prints titled 'Exercise to Build a Stronger Body', 'Five Piglets Save Their Mother', 'A Clean Home', 'Prohibit Studying Treachery', 'Aviation Activities', etc. While there were no overt attempts to proscribe *nianhua* in the 1930s, the presence of these prints in Baoding alongside other *nianhua* reflect the intentions of the KMT to overlay the existing *nianhua* market with propaganda.\(^{332}\) But with no further data on these prints, and no further recollections of their use and effect, it is difficult to say what effect these new *'nianhua'* had in promoting social reform. The lack of any supporting evidence, however, does indicate the limitations of the program, which ceased altogether with the Japanese invasion in 1937.

### 6.2 Folklore

In the Republican era, the study of folklore becomes important to the understanding of *nianhua* reform since it explains why, in spite of a burgeoning folklore movement in Republican

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\(^{331}\) See *Quanguo Xinsheng Huodong* (vol.1) 1935, p. 154.

\(^{332}\) Xie Zongtao *Hebei Yuekan* 4 (2), 1936 pp. 4-6.
China, *nianhua* generally failed to attract the attention of an academic audience until the late 1930s. Second, a brief discussion of the history of folklore studies, and the folklore movement of the 1920s and 1930s, will help to explain the prevailing attitude of the intellectual toward 'folk' *minjian* phenomena. This attitude is also the basis for the more comprehensive *nianhua* reform movement directed by the cultural authorities of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1940s and 1950s.

'Folklore' surveys in various forms have been part of the literati tradition since the Han Dynasty *Li Ji* (*Book of Rites*) and Zhang Xing's *Shang Shu*, which included sections on 'customs' *fengsu/minsu* in their pages. A second variety of customs survey, dating from the 4th Century AD *Jingchu Suishi Ji*, are the *suishi* guides to festive practices in specific regions. Well known customs surveys following this format include the Song dynasty *Dongjing Menghua Lu* (*The Eastern Capital: A dream of splendors past*) by Meng Yuanlao, and *Mengliang Lu* by Wu Zimu. Social customs in seventeenth century Beijing were recorded by Liu Tong's *Dijing Jingwu Lu*, and early Qing customs are recorded in Pan Rongbi's *Dijing Suishi Ji*. In the later Qing dynasty, Li Guangting's *Xiangyan Jieyi*, and Dun Lichen's *Yanjing Suishi Ji* provide introductions to customs in rural North China and Beijing respectively. But with the exception of the *Shijing*, folk stories and songs were rarely put into print until the late Ming, when Feng Menglong produced several compilations including *Shan'ge* (*Mountain Songs*) and *Guazher* (*Hanging Branches*). In the early Qing dynasty, Pu Songling's *Liaozhai Zhi Yi* (*Strange Stories from Liaozhai*) was inspired by the oral tradition, however this is presumed to be largely a work of the authors vivid imagination, rather than a straight transcription of folk-stories.
Throughout history the writers and compilers of 'customs' materials have been highly trained literati whose writings frequently refer to various classics and the work of their predecessors. *Dongjing Menghua Lu*, for example, was especially popular in this respect since it chronicled the customs of what later came to be considered a 'golden age' in Chinese history that could be held up as a model for later investigations of customs. This then suggests that the central motive in the study of customs was social control. County gazetteers dealing with finance and administration invariably included sections on *fengsu*, which established the management of social custom (including arts and literature, and 'women's purity') as government prerogatives in the maintenance of religious and social orthodoxy. The Confucian authorship and standardized format of the many *suishi* surveys marks them as having less to do with celebrating cultural variety, than with categorizing and controlling deviance. Those which fell outside of the *fengsu* or *suishi* categorizations, such as the works of Feng Menglong or Pu Songling, show that fascination with the curious had a rationale all its own. But even curiosity helped to define the limits of the 'strange' and therefore confirmed the limits of orthodoxy.

In the late 1910s and early 1920s, the first Chinese 'folklorists' and other sociologists began to examine the expansive culture that had, until that time, received little attention because it thrived at social levels beneath the consideration of most literati. Some individuals were bent on supporting or reviving this culture, while others were more interested in understanding why it had not died along with the Qing.

The formal understanding of 'folklore studies' had become established in Japan in the early 20th century, and it was there that sojourning Chinese scholars began to develop their ideas about folklore. One of these scholars, Zhou Zuoren, first suggested the pursuit of 'Folklore
Studies' in China in 1913, although his suggestions were not put into practice until 1918, when Beijing University's *Beijing Daxue Rikan* began to publish articles on folklore. In 1922, Beijing University established the Folksong Research Group (*Geyao Yanjiu Hui*), and its folklore journal *Geyao Zhoukan*, which continued in circulation until 1927. Following the decline of the *Geyao* project in Beijing, several organizers migrated to Zhongshan University in Guangzhou where they resumed their publishing activities, and in 1933 began to publish the journal *Minsu*. A third centre of activity was in Hangzhou, where the *Minsu Zhoukan* Society published the weekly *Minsu Zhoukan* between 1930 and 1937.

In addition to producing key journals during the 1920s and 1930s, the folklore associations researched massive quantities of literature on folklore and folk customs. But of all the literature and research compilations, there are only a handful of articles concerning graphic folk art. It was not until 1933 that 'folk-art' gained the pages of an academic journal when the arts journal *Yifeng* published a full edition on the subject. But as Zhong Jingwen points out in the introductory paper, there were still few individuals that had any interest in Chinese folk arts. Even this edition of *Yifeng*, while devoted to the 'folk arts', contains no more than a few notes on graphic arts, preferring to discuss performance art as representative. This bias was, as Zhong Jingwen suggests, related to the fact that all of the contributors to the early folklore projects were literature specialists, and not graphic artists.

In discussing 'folk art', the contributors to this journal found themselves in the same intellectual quagmire as every scholar that wades into the sticky issue of 'folk' culture - the main

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335 Ibid, p. 220.
337 Zhong Jingwen 'Guanyu Minjian Yishu' *Yifeng* 1(9), 1933.
question being how 'folk' is defined. Most discussants in the *Yifeng* volume resorted to a negative construction based on its contrast to 'elite' art, or in Zhong's terms 'primal' (as in 'Australian aboriginal art') versus 'refined' ('as in Parisian art'). Zheng Zhong, another contributor, was more decisive in his claim to have given the question of 'folk art' considerable thought, leading to the rather categorical assertion that among other art forms, "folk pictures are the kind of thing that can be seen on the walls in the countryside: [these include] personages, such as in Tianguan Sends Blessings, Lu Dongbin, the Eight Immortals, Jiang Taigong, as well as historical narratives like 'Liu Guan Zhang San Zhan Lubu'. For flowers and plants the most common are the peony and chrysanthemum, which can be seen on girls' sewing bags, or on the walls. These are the pictures they paint in the countryside.

This disdain toward 'folk-pictures' was sustained until 1937, when folklorist and artist cooperated for the first time in the context of the Folk Picture Exhibition at the Popular Education College in Hangzhou. Curated by Zhong Jingwen and art instructor Shi Shizhen, the exhibit lasted a week and was, according to Zhong, attended by a scholarly but skeptical crowd. Anticipating the mood of the audience, Zhong Jingwen explained his position in the introductory volume, pointing out that the material did not pay attention to proportion, perspective, projection, chiaroscuro, or any other of the 'modern ABC's of drawing'. In consideration of this, Zhong continues, visitors might rightfully feel that the religious and superstitious content of the material 'belonged (or should return to) the past'. Yet Zhong justified the exhibit by pointing out that, "the meaning of popular picture drawing technique is historical,

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339 This story refers to a scene from Romance of the Three Kingdoms, where the three sworn brothers -Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei, fight the arch-villain Lu Bu.
340 *Yifeng* 1(9) 1933 , pp.107-08.
341 The exhibit, based on Shi Shizhen's collection of 3,000 *nianghua* and 'paper-horse' from rural Zhejiang, was held on May 5-9 at Mass Education College. *(Zhong Jingwen, personal communication, Beijing, Dec. 1999.*
and at the same time it is modern," if one only looked at it from the European perspective on 'primitivism.' "Popular pictures' had thus been baptised as the representation of the 'peasant primitive'. While this distinction as 'peasant' art was academic at the time, it would soon become a vital point of reference in Yan'an.  

During the first four decades of the twentieth century, nianhua had been variously appropriated by vernacular literature promoters, Warlord governments, government social reformers, and academic folklorists who each attempted to use nianhua to promote their interests, but with little success. But, however shallow the drive for social reform through graphic print had been, the programs nonetheless established a precedent that will help to understand the development of graphic art under CCP direction. Rather than 'superscribing' mass media through narrative, example, and ritual, reformers had begun to directly 'inscribe' nianhua print with controlled images that could be imposed on the home without the mediation of local agents.

6.3 'Make Them Look Like Peasants': Structuring Print Culture in the Revolution

The roots of Chinese Communist Party experiments with 'folk art' can be found in the Central Committee Resolutions on the Peasant Movement in 1926, when it espoused the use of peasant cultural forms as "the best methods to get close to and organize [the peasants]." This was echoed by Cheng Fangwu in 1928, who called on intellectuals to target 'peasant and worker

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343 Although it should not be assumed that the exhibit had any direct influence on the wood-cut artists who were to direct the nianhua reform, Zhong Jingwen does not recall any of the prominent wood-cut artists having been in attendance.  
344 Wilber and How, 1956, cited in Hung War and Popular Culture 1993, p. 397. There is also some suggestion the discourse on peasant forms was fueled by the return of the 'Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks' from the USSR where they may have been exposed to Soviet folk art campaigns of the 1930s. Bonnel, for example, notes the Soviet application of 'peasant' lubok posters which phrased things in simple oppositions and basic themes. But as Hung insists, there is no evidence to support a direct influence on the CCP (Hung 1993 n.10).
masses' by learning the 'language used by the peasant and worker masses'. The literary bias of the folklore movement, however, also extended to the communist party, with the result that there was little interest in using graphic 'peasant' forms as a basis for propaganda. The communists did issue political posters during their association with the KMT in the 1920s, and there is some evidence of graphic art used in land-reform propaganda in the Jinggangshan base area in 1933, but there is no suggestion of a 'folk art' movement. Any other development of 'peasant forms' as propaganda would have been interrupted by the evacuation of Jinggangshan and the beginning of the Long March, which brought the CCP to Yan'an in 1935. Only after their arrival in the North west did 'peasant forms' in general, and nianhua in particular, come to be developed as part of the grass-roots propaganda campaign that helped to establish the CCP as a revolutionary force in rural China.

The use of woodcuts (not nianhua) by Yan'an artists can be traced back to 1929 when Lu Xun published the first edition of Jindai Muke Xuanji (Selected Modern Woodcuts). The genre spread through Hangzhou and Shanghai art circles as a number of ephemeral woodcut associations emerged, the earliest being the 'Wood-Bell Club' (Hangzhou, 1929) and the 'One-Eight Club' (Shanghai, 1930). In August, 1931 Lu Xun engaged the services of Uchiyama Kakitsu to teach a woodcut course in Shanghai. Over the next five years at least fifteen other societies organized, mainly in Shanghai and Hangzhou, but also in Beiping, Taiyuan, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Kaifeng and Nanchang. By November 1936, these groups had coalesced into the 'Committee of Shanghai Woodcut Artists', which counted among its ranks...
such future woodcut notables as Li Qun, Chen Yanqiao, Wo Zha, and Jiang Yan. Other associations that formed after the beginning of the war were the Chinese Woodcutters Association for the War Effort (Hankou/Guilin, 1937-1942), Chinese Wood-Engraving Research Society (Chongqing, 1942-1946), and the Chinese Woodcutters Association (Shanghai, 1946-?).

KMT suspicions that the woodcut societies harboured communism appear to have been well founded. It was from among the core group of thirty-one artists that the newly established Lu Xun Academy of Art (Luyi) in Yan'an drew some of its leading members, including Wo Zha, who became the principal of the Academy's Fine Arts Department in 1938, and Jiang Feng, who took the position in 1942. In late 1938 the resident Yan'an woodcut students and teachers organized the Lu Xun Academy of Art Woodcut Work Team. Shortly thereafter Li Dazhang, Head of the North China CCP Propaganda Department, and Shanghai woodcut veteran Hu Yichuan led a group of woodcut students, including Yan Han, Luo Gongliu, Hua Shan and Yang Yun, to join the anti-Japanese front in South east Shanxi. The group was stationed in the Taihang Mountains where part of the group produced woodcuts for the North China edition of New China Daily, while others remained at the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army to produce propaganda in various forms including serial pictures (lianhuanhua). This same group began to experiment with the 'nianhua' form in 1939.

349 Ibid. p.xxv.
351 Woodcuts of Wartime China 1945, p. 36.
352 Zhou Yongzhen Geming Wenwu 6, 1980, p.41 Xu Ling also adds 'Nuli Chungen' (Diligent Spring Tilling), and that these were based on Wuqiang prints. In 1941 Xu Ling also cut prints based on the Tianguan Cifu (Tianguan sends blessings) form called 'Kangri Guangrong' (Anti-Japanese Glory) and 'Ligong Xibao' (Meritorious Service). See Xu Ling, 1958 in Jiefang Qu Muke 1963.
As in the nianhua production of the North China villages, revolutionary nianhua are defined less by their content than by the social and cultural circumstances in which they were produced and circulated. As those circumstances changed, so did the concept of what comprised nianhua. In Yan'an and the CCP base areas, the definition of nianhua was also evolutionary and dependent on changing political and artistic directions. It will be useful, however, to consider that the central principle in determining what is, or is not nianhua during the Yan'an period, is the understanding of the producer that the product incorporated 'peasant styles', and was to be distributed through New Year markets.

The earliest representations of 'nianhua' style in Yan'an were by Jiang Feng and Wo Zha, who produced two (not yet located) prints in 1939 titled 'Protect Home, Guard Country' (baojia weiguo) and 'Spring Ox Picture' (chunniu tu). Although these examples were referred to as 'propaganda pictures' (xuanzhuan hua) rather than nianhua, they nonetheless incorporated colour, and the nianhua icons of Door God and Spring Ox. The prints were produced in limited numbers, manually coloured, and posted in local villages by the Luyi Spring Festival Propaganda Department. A third print from 1939, 'Celebrate the New Spring, Celebrate Victory' by Sun Baoshi (fig. 6.4), also follows the established Door God theme. Here it is printed in monochrome, although it is possible that the original form was issued in colour. As 'door guards' the print conscripts young children mounted on goats; the boy holds a string of fire-crackers used for New Year festivities, but also acts as a 'martial' figure holding a large sword inscribed in now-obsolete romanization dadao rhben ('Beat down Japan'). 'Beat down', a homophone for 'big

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353 There are conflicting reports on the chronology of events and the dating of prints. Wherever discrepancies appear I accept the authority of Zhongguo Xinxing Banhua Wushi Nian 1981.

354 Ai Keen Yan'an Wenyi Huiyi Lu 1992, p.341 notes that this happened in 1938, and that one of these early prints was Wo Zha's 'Bumper Harvest', rather than 'Spring Ox Picture'. Jiang Feng corroborates this in Huiyi Yan'an Muke Yundong Meishu Yanjiu 2, 1979,p.2. However Zhongguo Xinxing Banhua Wushi Nian Xuanji 1981 dates Bumper Harvest as 1943.
sword,' (dadao) invokes the Big Sword Society peasant militia which the CCP regarded as a potential ally, as well as Feng Yuxiang's Big Sword Unit, which had achieved fame as a successful anti-Japanese force.\textsuperscript{355} The girl, with her notebook and writing brush, represents the 'civil' side of door guard iconography, Wenchang (the god of literature), and finally the CCP literacy campaigns. The mother holds a large sheaf of wheat, and the father is equipped both with spade and a spear with its trademark tassel that identifies its bearer as a member of the local Red Spear security forces. Like the Big Sword Society, the Red Spears were regarded by the CCP as a peasant movement and potential ally.\textsuperscript{356} Finally the print includes auspicious phœnixes, and chickens (ji) - which as a rebus also represent auspiciousness (ji). As in 'Protect Home, Guard Country' and 'Spring Ox Picture', the configuration is an apt representation of the slogan that would become a major trope of the revolution: 'fighting on one hand, production on the other'.\textsuperscript{357}

The production of coloured 'door guards' and 'spring ox' pictures appears as a negation of artistic experience and aesthetic principles. Sun Baoshi's affiliation with the urban woodcut movement is uncertain, however Jiang Feng and Wo Zha were respectively trained at the Springfield Painting Society and Xinhua Art Academy in Shanghai.\textsuperscript{358} During the 1930s both were leading practitioners of the pervasively dark and politically provocative woodcut style largely inspired by the German impressionist Kathe Kollwitz. And like Kollwitz, these artists used their skills to explore the depths of oppression and resistance that they found in their environment. In 1937 the artists were forced to abandon the rich well-spring of Shanghai street-life that had inspired their intense woodcuts of labour and urban strife; and 1938 found

\textsuperscript{356} Elizabeth Perry \textit{Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China 1845-1945} 1980, pp.229-35 passim.
\textsuperscript{357} N.A.Chervova, \textit{Sovremenaja Kitajskaja Gravjura}, 1938-58 1960, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{358} \textit{Woodcuts of Wartime China} 1945, pp.31, 35.
them in the small north-western city of Yan'an, surrounded by impoverished farmers and peasant armies. This physical uprooting of both artist and artistic style did not produce a complete break with modernism, since various artists continued to apply their original technique to the rural subject throughout the late 1930s and 40s. But the arrival of the artists in Yan'an does coincide with the 'discovery' of the peasant, and an increased use of perceived 'peasant forms' in art. But the adoption of 'primitive' peasant styles was not a move toward formal 'primitivism' as it had been developing in the German woodcut school, and there is nothing to suggest that any of the artists thought of their work in those terms.

In Yan'an the 'peasant' never developed as a subject for modernist self-expression in the way that the 'worker' and urban poor had in Shanghai. While there are a few examples of 'modernist' peasant subjects, these interpretations quickly disappeared behind the party line. The representation of the peasant was instead guided by an understanding of the 'peasant' as seen through the traditional roles of 'plowman and weaver', and 'traditional rebel' that had long been reinforced through moralistic primers, agricultural treatises, novels, and popular xiqu. As in earlier regimes and representations these were not exactly empty categories, since the CCP still depended on agriculture, rural handicraft production, and peasant organizations for support. But in revolutionary Yan'an, these roles were further configured through arts and literature as political categories. When the artistic 'self' was removed, what remained were essentialist categories formed by residual narratives and visual structures. 'Plowing and Weaving' and 'Peasant Rebel' became the substance of the putative shift toward a culture centred not on the artist, but on a largely peasant audience. While the audience for pictures was probably more substantial than for literature, the peasant audience was, as Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker points out in
the context of revolutionary literature, a construct of CCP cultural policies, and not actually 'there'.

According to Yan Han, the resolve to use nianhua as propaganda was strengthened in December 1939 when the art-workers in south east Shanxi were shown a copy of a print in the form of the Buddhist 'Judges of Hell' that had been reformed to carry pro-Japanese content. Thus motivated, but having no experience with water-colour print, the group employed local nianhua artists and printers to teach them the technique. The products of this project included the following titles: 'Soldiers Cooperate' (junmin hezuo fig. 6.5) and 'Sabotage Communications' (pohui jiaotong) by Hu Yichuan; 'Auspicious Spring Plowing' chungen daji and the double door pictures 'Protect the Hometown' (baowei jiaxiang) by Yan Han (fig. 6.6, 6.7); 'Arduously Weave Cloth to Support the War of Resistance' (nuli zhibu zhichi kangzhan) by Yang Yun (fig. 6.8); and 'Realize Democratic Government' (shexian minzu zhengzhi) by Luo Gongliu (fig. 6.9). These prints have little if any relation to nianhua produced in production centres like Yangliuqing, Wuqiang, or Yangjiabu, and more closely reflect the European influenced training that the artists received in coastal China. Yet the crucial distinction is that the artists intended the work to be taken as nianhua. The prints were mass produced in the last few days of the year and sold on the New Year market of the nearby town of Xiying, Xianghuan county in 1940. The more than 10,000 copies on offer were reported to have sold extremely well, although the low selling price of one jiao (.10 Y) for eight pieces likely influenced their popularity. The intention of the woodcut team had also been to post nianhua along the streets

of local towns and villages, although they had difficulty keeping them in place because the local people quickly absconded with them.\textsuperscript{363}

This was interpreted as popular approval of the form, and the activities of the woodcut team received unofficial party approval when Peng Dehuai, then vice-commander in chief of the Eighth Route Army, praised the prints in a personal letter to the artists.\textsuperscript{364} At a February meeting in Wuxiang (south-east Shanxi), General Zhu De formally approved such vernacular forms as a revolutionary propaganda tool.\textsuperscript{365} Zhu's directives were reformulated that same year by Chen Boda in a policy statement that would become the essence of CCP cultural policy throughout the 1940s and 1950s:

\begin{quote}
This...requires that one selects the forms [the common people] have grown accustomed to over a long period, pack [new content] into the old form and give it appropriate refashioning: only then can they take delight in receiving it [\textit{le yu jieshou}] and digest it thoroughly.\textsuperscript{366}
\end{quote}

Zhu De repeated his support for revolutionary \textit{nianhua} in his July 1940 report on propaganda and art when he put wood-block prints (including \textit{nianhua}) into the context of 'national forms', declaring that to foster socialism artworks must incorporate the finer traditional elements and objects. In stressing the effectiveness of this policy Zhu referred to the success of the 'new' wood-block prints introduced to the markets around Shanxi and Hebei.\textsuperscript{367} Mao added his voice of approval to wood-block print propaganda in less formal terms when he suggested that Gu Yuan design new 'Door Gods' to replace the traditional styles. "How shall I draw them" Gu Yuan

\begin{footnotes}
\item[363] Sun Zhiyuan \textit{Ganxie Kunan: Yan Han Zhuo}n 1997, pp. 166-67
\item[364] Ibid. Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker also notes the role of Peng Dehuai in promoting Zhao Shuli's 'peasant realist' novel 'Blackie Gets Married', in 1943, \textit{Ideology, Power, Text} 1998, pp. 117-118.
\item[365] Zhou Yongzhen 'Muke zhi hua' \textit{Geming Wenwu} 6, 1980, p. 41.
\item[367] Bo Songnian \textit{Zhongguo Nianhua Shi} 1986, p.182.
\end{footnotes}
asked..."You know, I don't believe there really are any gods". Mao answered "Make them look like peasants."³⁶⁸

Gu Yuan, a native of rural Guangdong, had been a student of the Lu Xun Academy between 1938 and 1940, and graduated to work as a researcher in the Academy's Art Research Department until 1943 when he became an instructor in the Fine Art Department. It may be presumed, therefore, that Gu was familiar with the emergent pseudo-nianhua style of his colleagues when he produced a set of 'Door Gods', titled 'Attend to Sanitation' and 'People Enjoy Prosperity' (fig. 6.10, 6.11). Like Sun Baoshi, Gu Yuan employed children as subjects, but in place of a 'civil and martial Door-God' theme, Gu used the fertility symbol of 'Qilin Sends Sons'.³⁶⁹ The images contain additional attributes of ruyi (wish attainment sceptre), lucky bat, and Buddhist 'mystic knot', as well as various flower symbols that represent concepts of peace, continuity and prosperity. In departure from the usual nianhua form of 'Qilin Sends Sons', a girl is present where only boys once rode, the children wear the shoulder bag of the CCP cadre, and material wealth has been replaced by foodstuffs.

As Zhao Shuli emerged as the token 'peasant writer' of Yan'an, who simply 'wrote what he saw' in the countryside, Gu Yuan emerged as the token 'peasant artist' who did not identify with any established artistic style but claimed simply that "my works are displayed on peasant's kang. Country folk are my audience as well as my teachers."³⁷⁰ Following 'Attend to Sanitation' and 'People Enjoy Prosperity', however, Gu Yuan produced no further works that make such

³⁶⁹ The Qilin, sometimes translated as unicorn, is a mythical animal associated with childbirth. It was used in nianhua to express the desire for male children.
³⁷⁰ Quoted in Cao Wenhan Gu Yuan Zhuan 1989, p. 37. Gu Yuan and other wood-cut artists are also discussed in Hung Chang-tai 'Two Images of Socialism: Woodcuts in Chinese Communist Politics' Comparative Studies in Society and History, 39 (1) 1997 pp. 34-60. A brief discussion of the nianhua movement is appended to the article.
direct use of pre-communist iconography, preferring to develop narrative rather than iconography as the focus of his artwork.

Outside of Yan'an and the Shanxi border regions, *nianhua* style propaganda was under production in the New Fourth Army liberated Huainan region where wood-cut artists Lu Meng, Mo Pu, Cheng Yajun and others were working for the border-region newspaper *Suzhong Bao* in 1942. A poster, which may be attributed to this group, was produced through the Political Department of the New 4th Army, and incorporates a number of festival attributes (fig. 6.12). Although 'Oppose Capitulation, Disunity, and Retreat' is monochrome, it is printed on red paper and so connects the traditional festival colour with the colour of the Revolution. Continuing with festive icons, one soldier holds a festive scroll invoking Sun Yat-sen's 'Three People's Principles' as 'Independant People's Democracy, Joyful People's Livelihood, Freedom of People's Rights'. His partner holds up a folded uniform suggesting the presentation of new clothing for the celebration of New Year. Finally, a young boy, also in New 4th Army uniform, holds a festival lantern painted with the words 'War of Resistance'.

### 6.3.1 Popular forms: the meaning of Mao

May 1942 was a pivotal year for all art-workers in Yan'an and the border regions because of Mao Zedong's 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art'. The point of Mao's message was to give clear direction and sanction to 'popular art' and to restrict that which failed to 'comprehend' the needs of the masses:

> What do I mean by uncomprehending? Not comprehending their language. Yours is the language of intellectuals, theirs is the language of the popular masses. I have

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372 Print in collection of Anti-Japanese War Museum, Beijing PRC.
mentioned before that many comrades like to talk about "popularization" but what does popularization mean? It means that the thoughts and emotions of our workers in literature and art should become one with the thoughts and emotions of the great masses or workers, peasants, and soldiers. And to get this unity, we should start by studying the language of the masses. If we don't even understand the masses' language, how can we talk about creating literature and art?  

Bonnie McDougall has argued that the Mao talks signaled the shift from author centred culture to a mass, or 'audience' centred culture, in which the product was formed by its perceived receptivity. In terms of literature it may be true that 'peasant writing', especially the work of Zhao Shuli, rose to prominence only after the Mao talks. But for the woodcut artists involved in making nianhua, Mao's message of popularization was an endorsement of the nianhua work they had already begun in 1939 and 1940. Though it is also evident that the nianhua movement was escalated following this endorsement, as the Lu Xun Academy formally established the Nianhua Research Group the following winter.

By 1943 'mass language' had begun to appear again in the works of Jiang Feng and Wo Zha with 'Bumper Harvest' (wugu fengdeng fig. 6.13), and 'Reading Well' (nianshu hao fig. 6.14). In keeping with Mao's directions on learning the 'language' of the masses, both artists appear to have crammed on traditional visual vocabulary which they insert into their work with increasing frequency. 'Five grains and six domestic animals' fill all of the space surrounding a peasant and his children in Wo Zha's 'Bumper Harvest'. Jiang Feng's 'Reading Well' is likewise crowded with grains, coins, lucky bats, auspicious flowers, fish lanterns, and children, whose

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studiousness connects the Yan'an literacy campaigns with the exhortations to study found in earlier *nianhua*.

As in the above example of 'Protect the Home Town', Yan Han's interpretation of peasant vernacular appears as 'door guards', this time titled 'Militia Cooperation, Victory in the War of Resistance'. Yan Han was a graduate of the National Art Academy in Hangzhou who enrolled at the Lu Xun Academy in 1938 and traveled widely with the mobile woodcut production shop in Shanxi. In 1942 Yan returned to the Lu Xun Academy Art Research Department before becoming an instructor in the Fine Art Department in 1945. In 1944 Yan Han produced 'Militia Cooperation, Victory in the War of Resistance', in which a Red Spear militia fighter and a PLA soldier wield massive swords, hold spear and rifle respectively, and carry farming tools on their backs. The print thus represents the ideal of peasant and soldier working together - 'production on one hand, fighting on the other'. Yan Han could have based these prints on any of a wide variety of mounted door-gods, but a comparison of these examples with two other prints, supposed to have originated in Wuqiang, strongly suggests that Yan Han composed the work through direct substitution from these examples. Fig. 6.15 represents a mounted Door God that is unremarkable except for the fact that the words 'Fight Japan and Save China' are inscribed on its margin. In the second print (fig. 6.16), of exactly the same dimensions, we see virtually the same stallion, but now carrying a member of the peasant militia who swings a large decorated sword over his head. Beside him are written the words 'Protect the Border Region'. In the final prints from 1944 (figs. 6.17, 6.18), the relative size of rider and stallion has been adjusted to give a closer (but still imperfect) approximation of actual proportion. The decorated broadswords are still in place and held in the same grip, the proud stallions hold the same pose and wear similar harness and

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376 *Woodcuts in Wartime China* 1945, p. 31.
adornment, and there is no mistake that the prints are mutually influential. It has not been
determined whether Yan Han personally produced the earlier images as drafts of the final images
of 1944, or whether (as Wuqiang sources claim), the first and second had been produced by
independent peasant artisans. But in either scenario it is evident that Yan Han carefully studied
Door God form in preparation of his final product.

The Rectification Campaign of 1942-1944, which sought to re-educate formerly urban
cadres in good peasant ethics, had an ongoing influence on the way in which Yan'an artists drew
_nianhua_. In 1944 new _nianhua_ like 'Plenty of Clothing and Food' by Li Qun (fig. 6.19), and
'Recognize a Thousand Characters' by Zhang Xiaofei (fig. 6.20) received praise for their bold use
of colour and simple political messages. However, it is apparent that other examples produced
in 1944 did not satisfy the requirements of top political cadres. Although Wang Zhaowen's
criticisms should be seen in the light of the Rectification Campaign, his comments do not appear
until 1945 when he used the pages of _Liberation Daily_ to criticise Yan'an artists for failing to
conform to the peasant sense of reality (see above for detailed citation). Wang also criticised new
_nianhua_ for lacking in clarity, stating that a _nianhua_ based on the well known _yangge_ drama
'Brother and Sister Open Wasteland' was often mistaken for 'Husband and Wife Open
Wasteland'. This was an association which the directors of the drama were anxious to avoid
because it supposedly had lewd overtones. But matters did not improve when the sibling nature
of the picture was explained to the illiterate audience, because it was then read as 'brother makes
a pass at sister'. With its vivid expression of movement, swinging bodies, and meaningful eye
contact the image (fig. 6.21) also lends itself to this association, and also departs from the

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377 Some of these items may have been done on the lithographic press that arrived in Yan'an in 1944, although
lithograph production was limited by technical problems until 1946, after which colour lithograph _nianhua_
could be found throughout the liberated areas. See Hu Man _Jiefang Ribao_ Jan.24, 1946.
basically static nature of most earlier prints. In this case Wang blames the artist for misrepresenting the intended tone of the print, and misunderstanding the peasant.\textsuperscript{378}

With the surrender of Japan in 1945 the CCP expanded nianhua activities, sending Jiang Feng (then of the United University Art Dept.) and a team of CCP co-ordinators, artists, and local nianhua printers to Xinji, Hebei to establish the Central Hebei Nianhua Research Group. Following its occupation in 1947, Wuqiang was organized in association with the Central Hebei Nianhua Research Society, North China University Faculty of Art, and Xinhua Bookstore as the Shijiazhuang based North China Art Society (later renamed Masses Art Society). In the fall of 1948, members of the North China Art Society, co-ordinated by Jiang Feng, Wang Yapo, and Xi Lidao moved into Wuqiang and began to work with local artists to produce new nianhua.\textsuperscript{379} The final outcome was thirty new forms reproduced in some 380,000 copies, all were distributed through Xinhua Bookstore.\textsuperscript{380} A selection of these prints were put on display back in Xinji where Jiang Feng confirmed that they represented the direction that art should follow.\textsuperscript{381} Production levels for some of the 380,000 prints produced at that time indicate that the numbers were not sufficient for mass distribution. Instead, most were likely distributed through propaganda teams to cadres and village heads for posting in villages, rather than individual homes.\textsuperscript{382}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Nianhua</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Production Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'White Haired Girl'</td>
<td>Jiang Yan, Hao Yunfu</td>
<td>10,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Husband and Wife Learn to Read'</td>
<td>Gu Yuan</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Land Reform Picture'</td>
<td>Mo Pu</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Land Reform Picture'</td>
<td>Hao Yunfu</td>
<td>4,978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{378} The artist was probably Mo Pu, whose print of the same title was produced in Xinji in 1946. Wang Zhaowen's critique is in 'Nianhua de neirong yu xingshi' Jiefang Ribao May 18, 1945. Wang also notes that a nianhua exhibit had been held in the village of Qiaogou.

\textsuperscript{379} Other members included Wu Lao, Yan Han, Mo Pu, Jiang Yan, Gu Yuan, and Hong Bo.

\textsuperscript{380} This number is according to Wuqiang Xianzhi 1996, p.540. Other sources, including Bo Songnian, state 600,000 copies.

\textsuperscript{381} Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua 1996, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{382} Wuqiang Xianzhi. 1996, p. 540.
The most widely produced item at this time was the calendar. While Luyi artists in Yan'an mass produced the calendar icon of the spring ox, there is no evidence of the production of actual calendars before 1945. This earliest example, 'Farm Home Calendar' by Chen Yuefeng, again reverts to the 'spring ox' theme with a small group of peasants shouldering plows, hoes, and rifles, as a young boy (in place of Mang Shen) leads oxen through the fields (fig. 6.22). The calendar is dated both as *Minguo* 34 and according to the Western calendar as 1945, but uses only the lunar calendar with lunar cycles. As such it is specifically designed for farming use, even incorporating seasonal village activities on its edges. The first month, as depicted in the calendar, is given over to the celebration of the New Year with such activities as *huahui* where stilt dancers are the main attraction. This is followed by various types of spring agricultural work in the second through sixth month. In the seventh month, a low season for agriculture, the peasants attend mass political meetings (held from the *xiqu* stage of the former temple), and then return to the fields in the eighth and ninth months for harvest. To finish out the year there are more political meetings, followed by reading and writing study during the remaining winter months.

As in the earlier almanacs and *suishi* guides, party printers used the calendar both as a means to facilitate agriculture, and to associate political authority with the passage of time. The 'instructions on agriculture', however, are so general as to be useless to the experienced farmer, the real function being to show the agricultural patronage of the CCP. The print also makes the

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383 Based on figures in *Wuqiang Xianzhi* 1996, p. 540.
point that the calendar was under the control of the CCP, even though for practical reasons it is necessary to retain the Republican date.\textsuperscript{384}

A second calendar, produced by Xinji City \textit{Nianhua} Research Society in 1949, uses the 'spring ox' theme, complete with the 'knowing three years in advance' lunar calendars for 1950 and 1951, and lunar cycles found in Spring Ox calendars of the past (fig. 6.23). Supplementing the 'spring ox' is an arrangement of domestic animals, political banners, and the CCP star that replaces the original dragons and gleaming pearls as the symbols of atmospheric control.\textsuperscript{385} Even in 1949 the CCP used both the \textit{Minguo} signifier and lunar calendar time, a step back from the 1945 print, which provided an alternative date based on the Western calendar. Another 1949 calendar from the Masses Art Society is similar in form, although the calendar section for 1949 is more prescriptive in its directions (fig. 6.24). Under the combination lunar-solar calendrical calculations are specific directions to plant wheat, prepare fertilizer, harvest cotton, weave cloth, etc. The message still represents the agricultural patronage of the CCP, but expands its symbolism to include instructions that could be taken as a practical aid in agricultural production planning, while eliminating references to prescribed political directives - although this problematically assumes the literacy of the viewer.

Continuing with themes drawn from Qing dynasty agricultural codes is a calendar for 1950, still using the Republican date, and employing the \textit{Treatise on Agriculture} images of 'men till and women weave' that had originally been promoted by the Song and Qing dynasties. This example uses fewer visual references to the earlier \textit{nianhua} images, but the written text shows that the creators consciously intended this association with pre-modern social directives, even

\textsuperscript{384} \textit{Meishu Zuopin Zhanlan Tulu} 1978, illustration #3.
\textsuperscript{385} Ibid, fig.19. This is accredited to Xinji City \textit{Nianhua} Research Insitute.
spelling it out on the granary to the right: "the family gathers together to make plans, men till and women weave, the home will quickly prosper" (fig. 6.25). Where 'tilling' had been a conspicuous part of the communist platform, 'weaving' was also encouraged by the CCP not only for women, but for soldiers who often had to make their own uniforms. So in addition to invoking an age old ethic, 'tilling and weaving', as practically applied principles, were still vital to the economic structure of the fledgling state.

While the 'plowing and weaving', and 'Spring Ox' icons were easily reconfigured as production icons in socialist calendars, the manipulation of the most common temporal icon - the Kitchen God, was more problematic. A 1949 calendar, printed by the Masses Art Society, is an early example of the imagery that initially promoted Mao Zedong and Zhu De as the twin icons of the revolution (fig. 6.26). In this case Mao and Zhu are situated in a position which, by its proximity to the lunar calendar, invokes the symbolism of the Kitchen God and his wife. The juxtaposition is so obvious that it could only have been planned, though the arrangement is inverted, placing Mao and Zhu in the upper strata, and so avoiding overt association with the older form. A critical report from Wang Zhaowen indicates that a 1950 calendar from Kaifeng had failed to employ this measure of distinction when it combined an ox theme in its lower register with a 'farmer and wife' seated under a calendar in the upper register. In his opinion, this particular item was nothing more than a 'Kitchen God in farmers' clothes' and guilty of confusing the proper balance between 'old style' and 'new content'.

386 The standard format for these portraits, with a frontal view of Mao and Zhu in quarter profile, had been established at least as early as 1944, when it can be found in Jinchaji Huabao.
387 Wang Zhaowen 'Guanyu Xuexi Jiu Nianhua Xingshi ' Renmin Meishu 2, 1950, p. 24. A poor quality reproduction of this print can be found in this article.
As the CCP added political mobilization in village China to its original interests in rural 'production' and 'fighting', new *nianhua* began to add land reform, village democracy and literacy to their repertoire. At the same time these images started to move away from the established direction of peasant styles, relying instead on the woodcut style that Gu Yuan had developed in response to Mao's 1942 directives. In doing so, the artist left behind the 'peasant' construct seen in residual iconography, and began to develop the peasant as a political subject.

As Ellen Laing points out in *The Winking Owl* (1988), a comparison of two versions of Gu Yuan's 'A Divorce Suit' produced before and after Mao's 1942 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Arts and Literature', shows that the artist moved decisively toward a lightened style containing a simplified political message.\(^{388}\) This format was adopted by other woodcut artists in the 1940s, including Yan Han who used it to illustrate the practice of village democracy in a print titled 'Bean Election' in 1948 (fig. 6.27). The image of a village election in Dahecun shows the villagers, women included, gathering in the partially destroyed temple to cast their votes for village representatives. With no use of colour, however, the print does not stand as a *nianhua*. Not long after, however, the subject was re-cut by Gu Cun for the Masses Art Society (fig. 6.28). While retaining the original title and much of Yan Han's format, Gu Cun replaced most of the chiaroscuro with flat colour, introduced a primary school to the main temple building, and used the temple's sacrificial altar to hold the cups into which the peasants deposit their vote in the form of a bean. Gu Cun also replaced the mild confusion of Yan Han's event with a stronger sense of orderliness, and put women in the forefront of the election process.

The same progression from woodcut to *nianhua* can be found in the translation of Yan Han's 1944 'Winter Study' into land reform propaganda of ca.1948. The original monochrome

version (fig. 6.29) was a contribution to the Yan'an literacy campaigns, and shows peasants, gathered in a distinctively Yan'an style cave house, discussing a newspaper (likely *Liberation Daily*), studying from character primers, and doing sums. When the land reform programs began after 1947, Yan Han reformed 'Winter Study' as 'Ardently Learn Reading and Writing and *Fanshen* (turn-over) in Thought' (fig. 6.30). The print re-situates the peasants within the brick architecture of the North China plain, and replaces the original newspaper with *People's Daily*. The poster on the wall suggests the prescribed placement for political messages, and calls on the peasants to support the consolidation of the revolution: "The army moves forward, increase production, strengthen discipline, the revolution cannot but succeed' - printed by the Masses Art Society".389

An earlier example of a 'Land Reform Picture' by Mo Pu had been produced in 3,200 copies in 1947. A sequel to this appeared in 1948 or 1949 under the title 'Settling the Accounts' (*Qingsuan Tu* fig. 6.31).390 Settling the Accounts' contains a scene familiar to students of the land reform: a fat landlord cowering under the inquisition of the peasants. The crowd, supported by the Red Spear local defense corps, has torn the landlords house apart brick by brick to find the account books, which they demand that the lackey accountant clear so that the villagers can claim their due.391 Unlike earlier Yan'an *nianhua* that stressed simple lines and deep contrasts, 'Settling the Accounts' is a visual narrative which tells how the 'poor' peasants (mostly standing and gesticulating) and 'landless' peasants (unkempt fellow in white) unite with the temporarily disempowered middle peasants (seated at right) in the struggle against the landlord and his

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389 Yan Han's woodcut versions of these later *nianhua* can be found in *Yan Han Banhua* 1982.
390 *Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua* 1996 notes that this was produced and distributed by the Central Hebei *Nianhua* Research Society. This should then date as 1947 or 1948, however *Zhongguo Xinxing Banhua Wushi Nian Xuanji* 1981, dates it as 1949.
391 *Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua* 1996, p. 196
lackey. The image is further enhanced by the use of colour which, in addition to its production in an established folk-printing centre, reinvents the image as *nianhua*.

But while technically 'nianhua', these works bear little resemblance to established *nianhua* form, and rely on woodcuts as models instead of 'peasant forms'. Measures to reinforce the original model of 'learning from the peasants' were taken by Jiang Yan when he conscripted a local Wuqiang artist named Hao Yunfu. The two worked together on several projects including a set of lantern prints based on Tian Han's play 'The White Haired Girl' (fig. 6.32). The play was based on a local legend about a white-haired ghost that inhabited the mountains, which Tian Han reinterpreted the legend as the story of a local girl named Xi'er, driven from her home by a cruel landlord to hide in the mountains where the stress turned her hair white. Seeing this apparition the local people believed her to be a ghost until the People's Liberation Army arrived to dispel the myth and rectify the injustice. Like their earlier counterparts, these lantern prints (for which only frames 13-16 are available) make optimal use of colour. However the colours are applied in contrasts quite unlike anything seen in earlier lantern prints, suggesting the dominant influence of Jiang Yan, rather than his peasant partner.

A second print, which Hao produced independently, is titled 'Forced to Become Rebels' (fig. 6.33). This theme is based on a theatrical version of the *Bandits of the Marsh* adventures which, as has been shown, had been a major source of *nianhua* since at least the 19th century and a narrative support for 'traditional rebels' including the Taiping and the Boxers. True to the original story line, 'Forced to Become Rebels' relates the story of a military officer who throws in with the Liangshan heroes to escape the persecution of government agents. In the new version, however, the writers downplay the individuality of the hero and stress the contribution of the
masses.\textsuperscript{392} Giving personal sanction to the drama in 1944 Mao sent an open letter to the Yan'an Peking Opera Theatre in which he wrote:

> History is made by the people, yet the old opera (and all the old literature and art, which are divorced from the people) presents the people as though they were dirt, and the stage is dominated by lords and ladies and their pampered sons and daughters. Now you have reversed this reversal of history and restored historical truth, and thus a new life is opening up for the old opera.\textsuperscript{393}

In the same way that a 'new life' for 'old opera' could support the communist cause, traditional artists like Hao Yunfu were approached to support the new CCP meta-narrative that was already under construction by agents like the Yan'an Beijing Opera Theatre, and writers like Zhao Shuli and Tian Han.\textsuperscript{394} After Hao's prints were displayed and approved, the folk-artist was invited back to United University to give lectures on technique and to instruct students in \textit{nianhua} production.\textsuperscript{395}

One of the students whom Hao may have met at this time was Feng Zhen, who in 1948 composed a print which would become a model for the fusion of peasant forms with propaganda art. By Feng Zhen's own account, 'Children's Play' (\textit{Wawa Xi}, fig. 6.34) was conceived during a land reform assignment in rural Hebei where she noticed that when the village children were helping to "struggle the landlord" their "little faces revealed a deep hatred for the landlord's exploitation". Later, Feng organized a group of children to perform an act, giving one child the part of 'Old Uncle Sam' (\textit{lao Mei}), another the part of Chiang Kai-shek, and telling the rest to 'act naturally', which apparently meant kicking and criticizing their 'enemies'. As they acted out their parts Feng drew them, and so was able to achieve a 'natural' design. What Feng Zhen does not

\textsuperscript{392} Hung Chang-tai \textit{War and Popular Culture} 1994, p. 233.
\textsuperscript{393} Mao Zedong 'Letter to the Yanan Peking Opera Theatre after Seeing "Driven to Join the Liangshan Mountain Rebels" Jan.9, 1944, in \textit{China Reconstructs} Aug. 1967, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{394} The official line on the \textit{Bandits of the Marsh} changed in the 1960s when it was decided that Wu Song, the bandit leader, was a 'capitulationist' because in the end he threw in his lot with the dynasty and was put to work suppressing other bandit groups.
\textsuperscript{395} \textit{Hebei Wuqiang Nianhua} 1996, p. 5.
mention is that children performing a martial play had long been a popular New Year cultural performance, and that this had long since been represented in nianhua. Like earlier examples of 'socialist Door Guards' Feng Zhen took the nianhua form and incorporated contemporary symbolism into it. In a further refinement, Feng avoided direct reference to pre-communist symbols. The exposure which Feng Zhen received in the national arts journal Renmin Meishu indicated that she had properly handled the maxim of 'putting new wine in old bottles', and that her formula should be the basis for future nianhua reforms.396

The development of the nianhua genre in Yan'an must be seen as part of the ongoing struggle of the intellectual to develop an association with 'peasant forms'. The struggle began as the simple negation of modernist self-expression, and the adoption of essentialist peasant categories expressed through the appropriation of symbolic forms. But as the peasant became increasingly important to the revolution, emphasis was shifted away from the crude manipulation of iconography, and 'content' was separated from 'form'. The product was a predominantly formal 'peasant' composed of revolutionary ideology, and substantiated by model peasants and model peasant artists.

6.4 Nianhua in the early People's Republic of China

The use of nianhua prints to effect cultural change in the post-revolutionary countryside was confirmed at the end of the Civil War when the new CCP Ministry of Culture issued its 'Directive Concerning the Development of New Nianhua Work' in November 1949. This directive also reiterated Chen Boda's 1939 declaration that "in all arts work, we must first initiate the selection of those few most essential universal points that will most influence the masses."397

396 See Feng Zhen 'Wo Zhenyang Chuangzuo [Wawa Xi]' Renmin Meishu 2, 1950, p. 47.
nianhua should strongly represent the new labouring people, the happiness achieved through a life of struggle and their appearance of healthy heroism...utilizing folk styles and making strenuous efforts to suit the customary tastes of the great masses. It is required that every local arts and culture team concretely initiate and organize art-workers engaged in this genre to always employ the assistance of traditional arts when doing reform work.\(^{398}\)

In 1950 the Cultural Bureau conducted a partial survey of state organized nianhua production. The numbers show that production had increased substantially, although the 'round numbers' in Table III, i.e. '1,000,000' or '500,000' suggest that these are rough estimates and quite probably inflated. Yet the statistics do show that nianhua were promoted throughout the liberated regions of China, and that the production and distribution networks were substantial:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Production Units</th>
<th>Print Volume</th>
<th>Organizing Body</th>
<th>Distributor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beijing/</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>Cultural Bureau / Dazhong Art Society</td>
<td>Art Society of the Masses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shijiazhuang</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tianjin</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>Tianjin Art Assoc.</td>
<td>independent merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiyuan</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>Shanxi Art Assoc.</td>
<td>Taiyuan Printing Co. Xinhua Bookstore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chahar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>Chahar Cultural Fed.</td>
<td>nianhua shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pingyuan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>Pingyuan Art Assoc.</td>
<td>nianhua shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shenyang</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>Luyi Art Department, etc.</td>
<td>Northeast Xinhua Bookstore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbin</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Harbin Art Assoc.</td>
<td>independent merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Mongolia</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>Inner Mongolia Pictorial Society</td>
<td>independent merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datong</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56,500</td>
<td>not available (na)</td>
<td>Xinhua Bookstore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
<td>Shanghai Arts and Literature Dept.</td>
<td>independent merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Sanye Political Dept.</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hangzhou</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>Zhejiang Nianhua Soc.</td>
<td>contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taizhou</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuxi</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Wuxi Art Assoc.</td>
<td>Xinhua Bookstore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shandong</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>455,000</td>
<td>Xinhua Bookstore</td>
<td>Xinhua Bookstore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yan'an</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>Xinhua Bookstore</td>
<td>Xinhua Bookstore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xi'an</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>Xinhua Bookstore</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dunhuang</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Dunhuang Art Research Institute</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuhan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>Huazhong Cult. Group</td>
<td>Xinhua Bookstore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In addition to gross estimates of production levels of new *nianhua*, the Cultural Bureau categorized the prints in terms of their political relevance and calculated the approximate percentage in representation. As can be seen in Table IV, those prints dealing with agricultural production were produced in the largest numbers, followed by prints celebrating the revolution, the military, and the War of Liberation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Approximate Percentage of Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating the establishment of the PRC</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating victory and love for leadership</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Soviet friendship and international cooperation</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War of Liberation</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Soldiers</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Government</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Production and Lives of Workers</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Production</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenitude in Rural Life</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying Literature</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Hygiene</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories, old and new</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others, including land reform</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-Table IV Thematic content of reformed *nianhua* 1950

The first *nianhua* print reform team to visit Yangjiabu in the winter of 1950 was composed of members of the Central Academy of Art, Provincial Cultural Federation and Provincial Art Gallery. In November 1951 the more permanent Provincial *Nianhua* Team arrived

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400 Ibid.
to work with local artisans, establishing a joint committee headed by a local representative, and cooperatively producing 'new' nianhua. Following a 1952 directive from the Central Cultural Bureau 'Concerning Directives on the Reform of WeiBei (Weixian) County's Traditional Nianhua' yet another team was dispatched to Yangjiabu. In October, noted woodcut artist Zhang Yangxi led a seventeen member committee from the East China Cultural Bureau and Shandong Cultural Affairs Office in organizing the locally represented Yangjiabu Township Nianhua Improvement Committee. That same month nine of these committee members attended the Shandong Provincial Nianhua Work Meeting in East Yangjiabu.

The policy of 'weeding through the old to bring forth the new' (tuichen chuxin) involved doing inventory of traditional art forms, prohibiting some, approving some, and revising others. In Yangjiabu the reform committee categorized both 'old' and 'new' nianhua prints as follows: a) 'harmful' (you du de) including most of the Cai Shen (God of Wealth), Zhuangyuan (pre-eminent scholars) and those prints exhibiting money; b) 'reactionary' (fandong de) including prints referring to the imperial past and the wealthy Shen Wansan; c) 'superstitious' (fengjian mixin de) including all gods, d) 'to be reformed' (yao xiugai de) including the 'pictures of tilling and weaving' (discussed above), and 'The Qilin Sends a Son'; and e) 'can be retained at present' including the various prints depicting non-monetary 'surplus', naturalistic symbols, and various popular tales such as 'Legend Of White Snake'. Predictably, none of the 'new' nianhua prints were to be discarded although several still needed to be 'reformed.' Among the 'old' nianhua prints forty-eight were deemed acceptable, twenty-four were to be 'reformed', eight were

401 Yangjiabu Cunzhi 1993, p. 27.
403 Ibid.
reactionary, twenty-nine were 'harmful' and seventeen were 'superstitious'. Although these most recent restrictions were more sweeping and the mechanisms of control far more comprehensive, their parallels to the recommendations to the Republican government two decades earlier should not be missed.

The product of this expedition to Shandong can be seen in a number of early reformist nianhua. In its original form 'Ten Boisterous Boys in Spring' (fig. 6.35) depicts a group of boys playing in a blossoming plum tree and raiding a magpie's nest. In North China the plum blossom is the first flower to bloom in the spring, and represents the return to warmer weather and agricultural activity. The magpie is a harbinger of happiness, and ten boys (ten meaning also complete or perfect) expresses the wish for many sons. In the reformed print, 'Fruits of Victory' (fig. 6.36), the plum blossom was replaced with ripened fruit and a red star - the dominant symbol of the CCP. Instead of the auspicious content of its predecessor, the symbolic references are political and concern the confiscation and redistribution of property from 'landlords' and 'rich peasants' to the 'poor' and 'landless' peasants. The confiscated property was known as 'fruit'.

Another print on the same subject is one of the few 'reformed' festive prints done by a local Yangjiabu artist - Yang Luoshu (fig. 6.37). Here, a group of peasants of mixed gender replace the boys in gathering up the 'fruits of victory'. The 'tree' which bears the fruit is much less political, although much more productive than the version produced by a reform artist. Despite falling short on the political symbolism and reference to the CCP, this type of print reflects reform goals in convincing 'folk' artists of the benefits of expressing new intents through old forms.

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405 Zhang Dianying 1990 pp.194-95. Considering that there were thought to be some 1500 forms extant at the time, this 'weeding' dealt with only a fraction of the most popular prints.

406 See William Hinton Fanshen 1966, pp. 147-56 for further discussion of the distribution of these 'fruits.'
A similar appropriation can be found in the case of Shen Wansan, the wealthy merchant mentioned in previous discussion. The traditional nianhua image (fig. 4.18) shows Shen, assisted by the Dragon Prince, casting his net and bringing it up filled with treasure. In the reformed version (fig. 6.38) Shen has been replaced with a fisherman whose net is filled with fish. The direct reference to wealth has been eliminated, but through the rebus form of reference 'fish' may still represent 'surplus'. The image is also reminiscent of Mao's comparison of 'the partisan leader to a fisherman who casts his net wide but holds the ends very firmly in both hands.'

The glowing red sun in the background refers to the 'Great Helmsman' himself.

As early as 1952 it was becoming apparent that the mass acceptance of socialist nianhua was not going as smoothly as anticipated. In their 1952 report, the Yangjiabu reform committee indicated that entrenched beliefs and social and economic networks would not easily be reformed and that a policy of co-operation and toleration of existing structures was necessary. The report also gives some indication of the reaction in Yangjiabu and in the surrounding market area toward the reforms. The committee found that 1) while most nianhua prints were still 'feudalistic', Yangjiabu relied on them for their livelihood and thus reform must be gradual; 2) producers and peddlers were not interested in making or selling 'new' nianhua because they felt there was no market for them; 3) 'new' nianhua did not compare with the quality of the traditional product, and must adapt to customary aesthetics; 4) compared with lithographic products from Shanghai, the people still preferred traditional nianhua; and 5) organizational leadership was insufficient.

The tone of the statement was in agreement with Mao, who had stated that "one could not dig the superstitious ideas out of the peasant's mind but the peasants

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408 Yangjiabu Cunzhi 1993, pp. 398-99.
would automatically shed their superstitions when their material life became substantially improved and secure.\footnote{C.K. Yang \textit{The Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition} 1959(a) p.194. This policy of tolerating 'little' religions while suppressing mainline ones seems the opposite of the earlier KMT and contemporary CCP attempts to eradicate 'sects'.}

In 1955, a similar survey was conducted in Wuqiang, where 312 prints were collected from forty-five individual workshops throughout the county. The material was examined on a print by print basis and either sanctioned, banned, or recommended for revision. Of all the \textit{nianhua} examined, most were judged acceptable for printing, and only seven were recommended for revision, usually after correcting mistakes in text. Of the thirty-four that were banned, fifteen were criticized as 'anachronistic' (\textit{gujin bufen}, i.e. including an electric light in a scene from antiquity), ten were simply 'ugly', three were 'superstitious', four had mistaken characters, two had 'bad content', one was 'feudal' and one was guilty of depicting personages as 'modernized' (\textit{xiandaihua}). A number were criticized on several counts, others were banned but no reason was given.

Of the narrative prints based on \textit{xiqu}, most were deemed acceptable, although those concerning the story of Yang Silang were singled out for discrimination. The \textit{xiqu} on which the prints were based was also banned because, as Mei Lanfang once wrote that "it projects a concept of personal virtue that is quite compatible with attachment to alien rulers against one's own people", and that "this is a harmful distortion of the proper relation between public duty and personal sentiment."\footnote{Mei Lanfang 'Old Art with a New Future' \textit{China Reconstructs} 5, 1952, p. 22. According to the dramatic interpretation Yang Silong, a member of the Song dynasty 'Yang family generals', was captured by the Northern Liao. Keeping his identity a secret Yang Silong lived among the Liao for several years and married a Liao princess. One day Yang learned that his mother had come to the north in the company of an expedition sent to conquer their northern enemy. With the help of his wife, Yang Silong crossed enemy lines to pay respect to his mother, and after concluding the visit returned again to the Liao.} Of the calendars, about half were judged acceptable, one was judged
acceptable so long as the Common Era year was substituted, presumably for either the 'stems and branches' calculation or the year of the Republic. Other prints of this nature were also criticized as 'anachronistic' or 'feudal'.

When subjected to the open market, state sponsored *nianhua* prints of the early 1950s were unable to occupy more than ten percent of total *nianhua* print sales. This dismal response prompted the local Weifang City Culture Bureau, along with an artist from the Provincial Art Work Research Centre, to start a study session in 1953. The intent of the session was to lobby local artisans to give up the use of 'feudal and superstitious' *nianhua* prints and to help in making new forms. That year Yangjiabu produced 4,700,000 'new' prints, which made up half of that year's total. This percentage growth in 'new' and traditional forms deemed acceptable by the administration can be attributed to the subordination of Yangjiabu producers to the new 'Weifang Nianhua Print' and 'Weixian, Yangjiabu Nianhua Print' societies. The establishment of administrative mechanisms based in Weifang City (formerly Weixian) indicates a shift in control over the industry from local autonomy to district administration, and an increased capacity of that administration to use local resources to produce propaganda.

Despite the direct involvement of the Provincial Arts Research Centre, the total number of iconographic prints continued to rise as production climbed from 3,693,500 in 1953 to 5,250,000 in 1954, keeping pace with 'new' and otherwise secular prints. The continuing rise in production of the more dubious prints shows the difficulties for the state in obtaining its desired level of popular acceptance. Having thus failed to obtain popular approval, the state escalated the level of control, taking this industry, and village industry in general, out of private hands and

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collectivizing it in 1955. The measure coincides with a significant drop in the numbers of iconographic prints produced in Yangjiabu.\footnote{Yangjiabu Cunzhi 1993, p. 32.}

One of the first nianhua pictorials, Huadong Minjian Nianhua (East China Folk Nianhua) provides more concrete insight into what was acceptable in 1955, the year of its publication. The majority of its images are drawn from the Yangjiabu area. Included in the volume are various traditional forms of 'surplus' prints, Baogong xiqu, Buffalo Boy and Weaver Girl, non-iconographic decorative prints, 'farming and fishing families', 'Ten Tasks of Farmers', Romance of the Three Kingdoms action prints, 'Loyang Bridge', 'Romance of the Western Chamber', 'Growing in Wealth Daily', and 'Hundred Sons'. Most deities are excluded from the collection, although Door Gods remain, as do Liu Hai and several other 'wealth' prints, although the God of Wealth is notably absent. Also included are a number of 'reformed' nianhua, including several 'socialist Door Guardians', 'Fanshen', 'Prosperous Home' and some variations on the 'Hundred Sons' pictures. Most interesting is a liberation truck parked under a 'real yaoqian tree' loaded with fruit and with a 'liberation truck' parked below to haul it all away (fig. 6.39).\footnote{Huadong Minjian Nianhua 1955 passim.}

In Wuqiang the organizational activities were much less intense. After the establishment of the PRC, arts cadres organized thirty-four or thirty-five workshops in seventeen different villages by 1954, and in 1955 expanded printing work to another seventy-two workshops in surrounding villages, with a total of 201 registered nianhua workers. At this time there were reported to be 109 different nianhua forms in production. In 1956 the printers were organized into the 'Yuanda Huaye', 'Red Star', 'Nine Star' Co-operatives, which were then recombined into
the Huaye Factory. Two years later the Yuanda Huaye Co-operative was changed to Wuqiang County Picture Industry Co-operative Factory (aka Wuqiang Picture Factory).

During the Great Leap Forward (1958 to 1961) village *nianhua* production went into severe decline. Labour diversion, ideological hardening and the general economic devastation wiped out both the production capacity and the market for *nianhua* prints. The production statistics from Yangjiabu for this time show a severe decline in the industry with a total run of only 1.35 million for 1958, as compared to 5.95 million for the previous year and 10.5 million for 1954. None of the Great Leap Forward era prints produced in state operated printing workshops were of the iconographic form.

While doing field research in Hebei villages in 1958, one researcher for the Art Department of the Ministry of Culture met a number of peasants who still used Wuqiang Kitchen God prints in their homes. This was largely due to the fact that the co-operative had only thirty-seven official state calendars for over 400 households in its jurisdiction. As had been the norm throughout history, while the state retained its official monopoly on calendar production, the market still relied on private printers and distributors. As late as 1958, and probably into the early 1960s, the Kitchen God continued to be produced in Wuqiang (fig. 6.40), as was a calendar including 'spring ox and elephant'/twelve creatures of the Chinese zodiac. Except for the calendar dates (1958-1961), and the central banner reading 'increase production', this print is unchanged from pre-revolutionary *nianhua* (fig. 6.41).

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418 'Cunzhong Xihuan Shenmeyang de Nianhua' *Meishu* 1958, p. 11. The researcher also mentions that many of the calendars were out of date, suggesting that there had been problems in distribution.
In 1958 more prints were actually being produced in urban centres like Shanghai and Tianjin using modern technology than were printed in Wuqiang or Yangjiabu using wood-blocks. These were not the simple prints seen in the countryside, but had more in common with the pre-war *yuefen pai* material, with the 'worker, peasant, soldier' ideal of 'socialist *nianhua*' drastically reduced. According to one analyst, in 1955 the combined Tianjin and Shanghai production of prints reflecting 'worker, peasant, soldier/real life' themes stood at 859,000 items (39% of total) against 281,000 prints (12.4% of total) reflecting 'old style drama/chubby babies'. But by 1958 the production of 'worker, peasant, soldier/real life' prints was down to 211,000 items (2.6% of total) while 'old style drama/pudgy babies' had jumped to 5,829,000 items (72.4% of total).^419^

The problem, according to the author, was distribution. The 'masses' were supposedly open to modified socialist *nianhua*, but distributors persisted in ordering only prints that they knew would sell - most of which were 'old style drama/chubby babies.' The report even implicates the CCP's own agency, Xinhua Bookstore, since Xinhua's wholesale department distributed items to regional and local agents and private merchandisers who then sold the prints locally. Naturally, no business, socialist or otherwise, wished to accept large numbers of untested 'socialist' prints when it was common knowledge that old-fashioned auspicious prints were strong sellers. In one case a print titled 'Insect Control Team' (designed to co-ordinate with the Great Leap Forward in Agricultural Production) was issued by Tianjin Art Publishers, but Xinhua Bookstore refused to order a single copy, and so its production run was limited to 1,400. At the same time Xinhua ordered 'several tens of thousands' of 'Dragon and Phoenix Grant'*

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^419^ Xu Ling 'Nianhua gongzuo zhong cunzai de zhuyao wenti' *Meishu* 6, 1958, p. 7.
Auspiciousness' prints, also from Tianjin Art Publishers who in this case printed 690,000 copies.\textsuperscript{420}

Another problem facing the reformed nianhua program was the continuing competition from the old yuefen pai industry. In Shanghai an artist could get no more than 300Y for a 'Worker, Peasant, Soldier' print, but for a yuefen pai the artist could get a minimum of 400Y, and often over 500Y.\textsuperscript{421} One such print titled "A New Dress for the Party," designed by Yu Feng and painted by Li Mubai, and printed by Shanghai Huapian Publishing House, was made the focus of a pointed attack in 1958. The print depicts an attractive young woman standing in an ornate parlour, apparently preparing to go out to join a party (the social occasion, not the political organization) wearing a tight fitting qipao. An accompanying verse reads 'Going to the party, trying a new dress, simple but elegant, a gossamer shawl draped over the shoulders,...why, if you please, is the young lady smiling? Her name has just been placed on the honour role.'

The authors of the criticism report that 'A New Dress for the Party' was printed in 'many tens of thousands,' while another - 'Village Insect Control Girl' was produced in only 2,000 copies. Drawing the reader's attention to the former girl's fancy hair style, long polished finger nails, silk dress, and white shawl the commentators goes on to report the apparent shock and outrage that the print stirred up among the 'workers, peasants and soldiers' when displayed in Baoding, Tianjin, and the Shijingshan Steel Factory. The authors do not elaborate on why this, rather than 'Insect Control Girl', was mass produced, and in conclusion remark that "if 'A New Dress for the Party' is what we are calling quality material for our workers, peasants and soldiers, then we have a real problem."\textsuperscript{422}

\textsuperscript{420} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{421} Ibid. p. 8.
\textsuperscript{422} Feng Gang, Tian Kai 'Wanhui Xinzhuang Tu' Meishu 6, 1958, p. 31.
'Village Insect Control Girl', of course, was as much a work of imagination as 'A New Dress for the Party'. But while the circulation statistics show that 'A New Dress for the Party' at least appealed to an actual market, 'Village Insect Control Girl' was both based on imagination, and designed for an imaginary market of politically defined 'workers, peasants and soldiers'. And since the theoretical 'workers, peasants, and soldiers' could not, in theory, have comprised the audience for 'A New Dress for the Party', the makers and distributors of the print were to blame for circulating it against the will of the people. The anti-rightist movement of 1957-58 was intended to bring this sort of deviance under control, stop the circulation of independently produced graphic art, and eliminate the obvious contradictions between sanctioned form and actual production. With such contradictions out of the way the CCP could get on with its aesthetic construction of the 'actual' society of 'workers, peasants, and soldiers'.

The extension of that policy into the Great Leap Forward in 1958 can be seen both in the above substitution of 'rightist romanticism' with 'peasant realism', and finally in Mao's 1958 call for a new brand of 'revolutionary romanticism'. 'Revolutionary Romanticism' appears in Shi Banghua's 'The Reservoir is Good', which is one of the few Great Leap Forward era prints from Yangjiabu. Shi Banghua was a non-local state-employed artist working in Yangjiabu. In 1959 Shi designed this award winning print to promote the reservoir digging campaign that was then sweeping rural north China. This work's presentation of chubby babies riding goldfish is strongly reminiscent of those traditional nianhua prints which, through visual pun, suggests 'a surplus of male progeny'; the lotus, also through visual pun, may represent continuity or peace. The juxtaposition of the reservoir with children, fish, and lotus thus implies the continuing value of the reservoir to posterity (fig. 6.42). The countryside is no longer simply 'realistic' in its
representation of village idealism, industry, and prosperity - instead, the village has gone beyond the 'real' and been transformed into a utopian future. The print responds to Zhao Shuli's 1955 novel *Sanliwan* where in one famous scene a village artist shows his fellow peasants how wondrously prosperous their village will look after a canal has been dug. As Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker writes "his painting enacts the role that all literature and art were expected to play in a revolution conceptualized as continuous: to provide a vision of the future and thus...to make possible the collective's movement from the present onto the next stage of development". Since Zhao Shuli was also head of the Folk Art Reform Section of the Ministry of Culture, Shi Banghua's application of the water metaphor to *nianhua* print was intended to situate the work within official discourse.

Ironically, the actual production of village art during the Great Leap Forward was limited to professional art cadres like Shi Banghua, because in places like Yangjiabu many local artists were engaged in digging the canals and reservoirs which took them away from their usual occupation. In February of 1957, when Yangjiabu residents would normally be engaged in printing, 300 villagers were sent to begin digging a reservoir near the village; and in 1959 more than 200 individuals were diverted to work on the Xiashan reservoir. Again in 1960 villagers were sent to dig a reservoir on the Bailang River. This, and the severe deprivation caused by labour diversion away from agriculture, produced an 80% decline in the production of art in the village.

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424 In contrast to the decline of the *nianhua* industry, the 'peasant painting' in places like Huxian, Shaanxi, were founded during the Great Leap forward, although they did not become prominent until the early 1970s. Production dropped from 4-5,000,000 items in 1957 to 1,000,000 items in 1958. *Yangjiabu Cunzhi*, 1993, p. 32.
The village industry in Yangjiabu received a brief respite beginning in late 1959 during the tenth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. In commemoration of the event the Provincial Cultural Bureau once again took notice of Yangjiabu, pronouncing it an 'Important Birthplace of Shandong Art' and dispatched a team to produce a number of commemorative prints. Following this, under the liberal economic policies which were adopted nation-wide in 1960 and 1961, nianhua print production rebounded from a 1959 low of 1,350,000, to a post liberation high of 11,250,000 copies, half of which were the traditional iconographic subjects that had disappeared in 1958-59.426

By the 1960s the bovine references in state calendars were phased out, only to be replaced with the symbol of the People's Commune - the tractor, or 'iron ox'. In 1963 Wuqiang issued a 'knowing three years in advance' calendar containing a good selection of auspicious icons from the bat at the top and the phoenixes on either side of the calendar, to the magpies and swallows celebrating joyful spring (fig. 6.43). The centre-piece, however, is a tractor bearing the banner 'long live the people's commune'. The imposition of a 'Spring Tractor' in place of a Spring Ox would not have escaped people used to obtaining a three year 'Spring Ox' calendar picture to decorate their homes. 1965 saw the production by the Wuqiang Co-operative Picture Factory of yet another 'spring tractor' print (although printed in 1964), in which the tractor icon is superscribed with the theme of women, no longer bound to the loom, but at the centre of agricultural production and in command of the tractor. Xinhua Bookstore, which is cited as the distributor of the print, marked the retail price at five fen (fig. 6.44).

In 1963 Wuqiang county established the Co-operative Picture Workshop, while the local production team organized fifty-four workshops to produce 5,000,000 items. Of these prints

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some were distributed through the state (probably Xinhua Bookstore), but the majority were distributed through private entrepreneurs. The Wuqiang Picture Workshop produced 836,430, of which 184,391 were sold to peddlers from Wuqiang and other locations in Hebei and Shaanxi provinces.\(^{427}\) The total output of the county was 13,750,000 *nianhua*, in addition to 300,000 'front room' pictures. The output value for the year is recorded as RMB 1,540,000 with a profit of RMB 150,000. Of the fifty-six styles of print issued that year twenty two had 'realist' content, four contained 'revolutionary stories', 'traditional' subjects were found in four prints, and there were twenty six 'bird, flower, insect, animal' subjects.\(^{428}\) The production at this time was primarily secular, revolutionary, and 'realistic', although one cannot be sure to what limits 'realism' was pushed in appropriating traditional imagery.

By 1964 the Wuqiang Picture Workshop employed 759 people from across the county, and the year's total came to 10,000,000 *nianhua*, in addition to 300,000 'front room' pictures. But in 1964 the political climate had begun to change and the industry dropped off sharply when the 'Socialist Education Movement' denounced *nianhua* as 'feudalistic'. In Yangjiabu some 1500 sets of traditional printing blocks were destroyed, and in Wuqiang the picture workshop was ordered not to distribute the 364,000 prints in its storehouses. The next year the production teams from around the county collected and destroyed precisely 16,901.5 kilograms of *nianhua*. In late 1966 *nianhua* production ground to a halt when *nianhua* were officially associated with the 'Four Olds' of the Cultural Revolution.\(^{429}\)

\(^{427}\) *Wuqiang Xianzhi* 1996, p. 540. The information that peddlers were still selling prints on the street is also supported by the earlier report from Yangjiabu which complains that peddlers aren't interested in reformed *nianhua*.


\(^{429}\) *Wuqiang Xianzhi* 1996, p. 541.
In the twenty-five years between the establishment of the PRC and the closure of the nianhua industry, communist authorities had gone to extreme lengths to use the traditional nianhua form to reconfigure society in its own image. Under the imperial state, traditional nianhua had served to support an indirect symbolic relationship between ritual, family, home, and state. Under communist direction, nianhua were designed to break that connection and reconfigure village prosperity as a direct relationship between village productivity and political power. As the 1950 statistics cited in Table IV indicate, the most widely produced 'revolutionary' nianhua prints were those dealing with agricultural production at 31%, and a further 6% representing the 'plenitude in rural life'. Most of the nianhua discussed above survey represent the village and the villager as protecting or using the established village or domestic space to improve production through political, agrarian, and educational reform. The older ritual and narrative configuration of the village space that had supported a ritual and ethical relationship with power and prosperity is supplanted, or re-configured, as a 'realistic' relationship in which prosperity comes directly from production. Print was thus used to reform the ritual structure of the North China home and village into a political structure that was to guide physical and community life.

But while the central claim to legitimacy of print artists of the 1950s was their perspective on 'reality', few historians would argue that any of the above reflect more than ideology. The land reform initiative was marred by violence and confusion, village democracy was a sham, and literacy remained low throughout the early years of the People's Republic. Shi Banghua's idealized representation of the unity of print, industry, and village prosperity masks the reality of forced labour, disrupted local economic systems, and rural displacement caused by the Great
Leap Forward that devastated the rural economy, including the village printing industry.

Furthermore, as in the earlier generation of prints that represented women in positions of power and liberation, the 'revolutionary woman' of the 1940s and 1950s must be understood in the context of the continuing paternalism of revolutionary culture. As in pre-revolutionary nianhua print, this production cannot be taken as a faithful representation of how people lived their lives, but only as a suggestion of how they wished their lives to be. But unlike pre-revolutionary nianhua, the reproduction of these ideals in communist China was not just open to the moral suggestion of central authority - it was under its direct control. The new nianhua art of the 1950s, therefore, must be interpreted not as a representation of how peasant artists imagined their lives, but as a representation of how the CCP thought, or wished the peasant's lives to be.

6.5 Print and Politics: from Superscription to Circumscription

The academic and political identification of nianhua and village 'folk' culture as a site of reform began in the Republic and matured in the PRC. In Yan'an, nianhua served as a 'low tech' but highly efficient form of print, and so ameliorated problems of reproduction that continued into the 1950s as the state owned printing industry struggled to meet the demand for such basic forms of print as the calendar. And yet there was more involved in the decision to support nianhua than merely its technical advantages. Arts cadres believed that nianhua print and its distribution through traditional networks could carry socialist ideologies into places where mechanized print could not. Existing power structures were (consciously or otherwise) used to support the new iconography, and nianhua were explicitly designed to fit, and take advantage of those existing aesthetic and cultural niches.
The wood-block print reform movement had moved decisively toward the expression of various themes through 'national forms' in the 1940s. But a number of factors question the success of the movement in mobilizing peasant forces and instilling a sense of 'socialist realism' into popular symbol perception. First, early nianhua print production in the Border Regions never attained the levels necessary to reach more than a small percentage of peasant households. In south east Shanxi, for example, the production was limited to a small propaganda team, and given problems in acquiring the necessary materials such as good quality paper, there is little chance that it could have produced more than a few thousand copies annually. Even after expanding into Wuqiang where there were proper facilities and experienced personnel, the nianhua print reform team was only able to produce several hundred thousand copies, still a fraction of normal regional demand. Because of limited production, available prints were likely distributed to central agencies which posted them in prominent places in the village, or to propaganda teams that simply showed them to villagers during local visits.

Tian Ling's report of his first arrival in Wuqiang, and Cheng Yanqiu's 1952 report from Yangjiabu also indicate that the market for nianhua had recovered to some considerable extent before the arrival of reform cadres. Socialist propaganda, therefore, was not the only available form of festive print available, and so the new forms would have faced stiff competition from local nianhua forms. Moreover, as the evidence of continued production of Shanghai yuefen pai, Kitchen God prints, and other iconographic forms demonstrates, this competition was sustained virtually until the Cultural Revolution.

More important in judging the effect of reformed nianhua prints on the Chinese countryside is the social gap that existed between peasant clients and cosmopolitan

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reformer-artists, most of whom had originated in Yan'an and certain coastal cities. When wood-block print reform became policy during the 1940s the reform artists were compelled to make significant alterations to their style to appeal to 'peasant ideals'. Nevertheless, they failed, or refused to cross the perceptual boundary that would make their work recognizable to the peasant as nianhua (as is evident from comparisons of early Shanghai woodcuts, Border Region woodcuts and traditional wood-block prints). When propagandists invited peasants to 'teach' them the skills of wood-block printing they reported that the peasants criticized new wood-block prints with such earthy comments as: "why is this person's face half black and half white?", "why are there so many lines on this person's face"\(^{431}\) (in reference to the technique of contrast inspired by Kollwitz), or "this donkey's rump is too high and his ears are too long"\(^{432}\). The artist rhetorically proved the wisdom of the peasant and their own humility in 'learning from the peasant', and confirmed their own commitment to CCP arts policy. In reality, what these artists created was an idealized representation of the peasantry, which was a composite of urban perceptions of the countryside, political idealism, and impressions formed through contact with the peasant. While they did manipulate older forms and images, the new regime denied itself access to some of the most powerful icons that had tentatively surfaced as 'farmer kitchen-god' and 'Eighth Route Army god of wealth'. In placing politics ahead of utility, the movement ensured that itself little chance of achieving a real grass-roots revolution in visual culture. As reformers discovered, the ideal could only be realized by taking control of production and interpretation out the hands of the original producer.

\(^{431}\) Ai Keen, Yan'an Wenyi Huiyi Lu, 1992, pp. 373-4.
\(^{432}\) Zhou Yongzhen 'Muke zhi Hua' Geming Wenwu 6, 1980, p.39.
The village nianhua industry was thus marginalized when it failed to meet the 'utopian' standard. For increasingly hard-line socialists the superscriptive policy of 'national forms' had to be replaced with the 'prescriptive' policy in which the printed image was structured not by the choices of the peasant producer made under the 'guidance' of the arts cadre, but by political directives and trained cadres. At the same time as the single county of Dazhai became the model for socialist agrarian 'utopia', the responsibility for the representation of this utopia was shifted to controlled sites - especially Hu county, Shaanxi. This county, having no particular background in graphic arts, provided a clean slate on which arts cadres were able to build a 'peasant painting' industry and thereby to achieve unity in idealist art which was then reproduced through the urban press. Only then were art reformers able to pronounce that at least one group of peasants had "correctly handled the relationship between politics and art and between superstructure and the economic base and put into practice the principle of art serving the worker, peasants, and soldiers, serving socialism and proletarian politics."
Conclusion

_Nianhua_ prints provide unique insight into the cultural and social history of rural China. But we cannot read _nianhua_ without making extensive inquiry into what _nianhua_ are, and what role they played in the society in question. As a result, it has been impossible to separate the representation of _nianhua_ from its physical and social production in the North China village. What has emerged is not a simple history of rural society, nor a simple history of printing in rural society, but rather a history of how certain understandings of culture and society have been produced in village China through the medium of print.

When events are submerged in the processes that create the comprehension of them, they often appear confused and not implicitly organized into any particular value such as 'nationalism', or 'modernity' through which we in the present often view the past. But appreciating the confusion of the past does not deny the fact that out of all the narrative and visual potentialities that arise in any particular time and place, certain trajectories do emerge as dominant discourses.

Yet however influential certain interpretations of past or present experience may become, rarely do they limit the field to a single perspective or account. What appear as trajectories in narrative and visuality are constantly subjected to fluctuation and variation, and comprehended through the larger body of existing narrative and visuality that conditions all subsequent readings and interpretations. Although this may suggest a contradictory position that history is both chaotic _and_ ordered at the same time, the methodology is primarily concerned with understanding how people in rural China, and those who presided over it, attempted to extract order _from_ chaos. To reiterate Carr's point, narratives of past and present do not represent reality - they are only the extension and configuration of its primary features.\(^{434}\)
Understanding how narratives were thus constructed in reference to reality began with an investigation of how nianhua were produced and distributed in late 19th and early 20th century North China. Based on evidence that the industry and distribution networks were highly efficient in production and marketing, I concluded that the village based print industry was prescriptive in form (although not perfectly so), and that this prescriptive nature was a fundamental factor in producing industry standards and visual conformity. The physical factors of environment, economy, physical geography, and print procedures in the village also imposed limits on the free appropriation of texts, and directed the way in which texts were read. Once these factors were delimited it was possible to consider how perceptions of the social and physical world were put into print and how print configured perceptions of the social and ethical world.

Nianhua demand and interpretation depended on the space and time in which they were displayed, and the ethical regime under which they were produced. For many nianhua this space was the home, and the perception of time corresponded to the ritual and agricultural calendar, which were themselves configured by ritual, state, and religious bodies that imposed their respective mandates on the village. By the declining years of the Qing dynasty a representation of space and time began to develop this was more expansively 'cosmopolitan', and more immediately 'local' in the sense that place, event, and period became related concepts important to the reading of the representation. But while these representations made a cognitive leap, they were still extensions of events that drew the subject in respect to the narrative form that made sense of them.

Since nianhua print is socially derived, print and its interpretation were considered in the context of social change. In regard to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this was treated as a

-David Carr, Time, Narrative and History 1986, p.16
process of infrastructural, technological, and political change that produced shifting peripheries. This not only affected the ability of the village to sustain print production, but also brought print makers into contact with an expanded print environment, and new printing and viewing technologies. Village printers attempted to meet and adapt to this challenge, but the shifting technological periphery and changing aesthetic sensibilities eventually undermined (but did not eliminate) the local industry. Technology and infrastructural change then contributed to the increasing capacity of centralized agencies to produce a 'circumscriptive' society out of an earlier 'prescriptive' one by actively directing and controlling the production of print in ways that exceeded the predominantly persuasive techniques that had characterized dynastic China.

The emergence of a putatively secular state in the twentieth century created the challenge of establishing secular legitimacy in an environment that was deeply attached to ritual. With few political or ideological resources to promote their program, the secular state of the Republican era could do little more than meddle with village print. But, as such resources were consolidated under the People's Republic, the state was increasingly able to direct, monopolize, and finally circumscribe print production, moving it toward the construction of meta-narrative. The physical closure of the village nianhua industry in 1964, a clean break in the production of nianhua, was invoked to introduce closure to the modern history of the art form.

The reconstruction of nianhua as a text has involved them in many contexts - from family altar, to village market-place, revolutionary headquarters, and back to family altar in a complex relationship of appropriation that befits their nature as print. The reality of appropriation has also led to the conclusion that a straightforward visual analysis of a printed picture cannot be used to ascertain an expression of interest, social class, education etc. In other words, the printed picture
can never be judged simply as an index of feeling. I have argued instead that the subject is given historical substance by the structures of propagation and control through which knowledge of the subject is made available. If the circumstances of propagation and control actually produce, or are involved in a conscious discourse of 'resistance', 'modernity', or 'nationalism', then there is a valid context, even a necessity for relevant discussion. Likewise, we cannot approach village print and village culture as a 'popular culture' either having symbolic autonomy from, or dependence on 'dominant culture'. Essentially, we cannot begin a discussion of the past by presuming to find evidence of a ideal primarily configured by the present, because the past will certainly disappoint us in that respect.

The visual text as a representation of history needs to be understood primarily through its structuring qualities, and the classifications, divisions and groupings than make its comprehension possible. As an artistic expression, images are internally structured to form a narrative, or evoke a certain impression. Externally, the contextual, physical and social structures of the visual text control its meaning. Structures of both natures control the image, and aid comprehension because they demonstrate the limits of free appropriation and possible interpretation, and bring things together in ways we might not have imagined if visuality and social production were treated separately. Internal graphic, and external social structures helped people in the past to make sense of what they were looking at, and these reconstructed frameworks help us in the present to appreciate how those same people looked at an image, and used it organize their environment. The challenge of writing cultural history through predominantly graphic texts begins by defining which structures were most relevant to the society in question, and how those structures were understood and configured through the
graphic text. In other words, the problem lies not in determining how people sought to control the world, but in how they sought to control their sense of it.
Appendix I: Illustrations
4.3

4.4
反对投降分裂倒退
抗战
6.12
兄妹開荒
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(including Wang Shangyi Collection), London, UK

Author's collection of modern reproductions
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abbreviation: JNCBRAS = Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society

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