

Finding the Tiger
from View of Chinese

WHAT IS THE TIGER



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THE SPRING FESTIVAL





THE SPRING FESTIVAL



Tiger-Shaped Buns

According to folk customs in Shanxi and Shaanxi, on the wedding day, the bride's family will make tiger-shaped steamed buns (also known as 'ritual buns') and hang them in the bridal chamber. When night arrives, the bride and the groom share these buns. Steamed buns tend to have many symbolic meanings. In this case, it embodies the good wish that the newly-weds will be healthy and blessed with lovely babies.

Happiness, Wealth and Longevity

New Year painting
from Beijing the Ming Dynasty
(1368-1644)

This picture symbolizes lunar New Year sacrifices. The bat is a symbol of happiness. The deer symbolizes wealth, and the peach symbolizes longevity. The fairy child with a peach branch and the red bat and deer symbolize heartfelt wishes for the family.

The Spring Festival is the first day of the first lunar month, also known as Nian, literally meaning the New Year of lunar calendar in Chinese and commonly referred to as "Guo Nian (Celebrating the Lunar New Year)". It is about in January or February on the Gregorian calendar. Chinese people regard it as one of the most important traditional festivals. The Spring Festival has a long history, originat-





ing in the activities of worshipping Gods and ancestors in the beginning of new years in Yin and Shang periods (1600BC—1046BC). In the past, the Chinese called the first day of the first lunar month Yuan Dan (the first sunrise), or Yuan Ri (the first day) or San Zhao (three beginnings: the beginning of the year, of the month and of the day. Zhao means beginning.). Before the reign of Hanwudi (Emperor Wu



Cloth Tiger

Ancient Chinese believed that the tiger was a divine beast which could ward off evil spirits and negative influences. Common Chinese people have used cloth tigers as gifts for their children. These handicrafts embody people's good wishes for their children's well-being and Godspeed.



The Fortune-Enhancing God





Tiger-Head Hat

According to folk customs, tiger-head hats worn by children embody their parents' good wishes for their well-being and good health.

The Kitchen God and the Kitchen Goddess

It was said that the Kitchen God had a wife named Gao Lanying, commonly known as the "Kitchen Goddess." There is another saying that the Kitchen God had two wives: Wang Haitang and Guo Dingxiang. These two were often jealous and locked in a fierce fight. Correspondingly, there were three kinds of the picture of the Kitchen God: the first one has a single Kitchen God enshrined usually in shops and workshops, only males worked in these shops in the old time. The second one has the Kitchen God and Kitchen Goddess. The third one has the Kitchen God and two Kitchen Goddesses. Rich people in the old days had more than one wife and concubines. So they enshrined three Kitchen Deities.

of the Han Dynasty, comprising the years 140 to 87 BC), the time of the Spring Festival was not regular, so Wu Emperor of Han ordered to use the first day of the first lunar month as the beginning of a year. This has lasted to the present. After 1911, China adopted the Gregorian calendar and renamed the lunar Yuan Dan as the Spring Festival. In the Gregorian calendar, January 1 is taken as Yuan Dan (the New Year's Day). The time of the Spring Festival was fixed from then on.

Among all festivals in the year, the Spring Festival has the merriest atmosphere. On this day, people in ancient times held morning

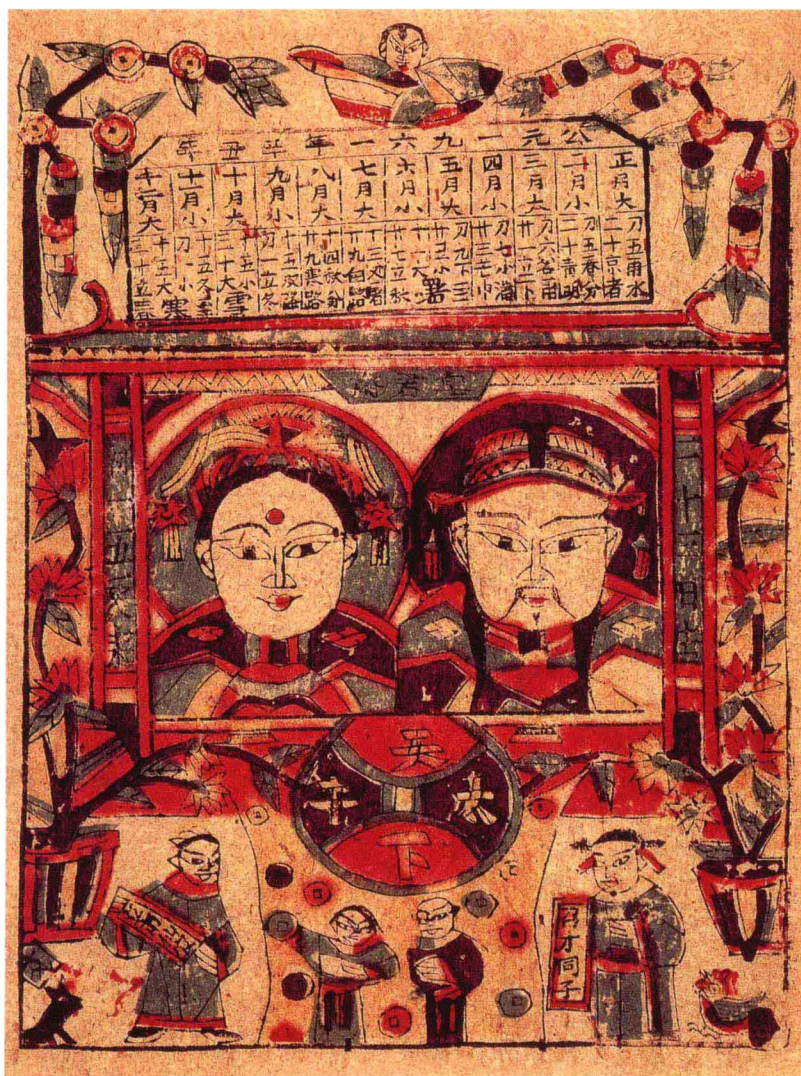




celebrations to greet gods, worship ancestors, divine the weather, pray for good harvests and participate in a variety of recreational activities. As time passed, the period of the festivities extended both forward and backward, and the celebration became richer and richer in content. Finally, it became a traditional festival containing the innermost aspects of Chinese culture. Over several thousand years, some regular celebrating activities, which are commonly called Nian Su (Spring Festival Customs), have been established by Chinese people. With the progress of the times and economy, the celebrating ways has also



Tiger
clay sculpture



The Kitchen God and the
Kitchen Goddess



Tiger
clay sculpture

been changed. Nowadays, Chinese people are more willing to select those happy, auspicious and brand-new forms to celebrate the Spring Festival, which are seen as “New Spring Festival Customs”. Now, let’s have a look at the traditional and new Spring Festival customs.

Offering Sacrifices to the Kitchen God

As the old Chinese saying goes, “When the 23rd day of La Month comes, the Kitchen God will go to the Western Heaven”, the 23rd day of La Month of each year (the twelfth lunar month) is commonly referred to as “Small Nian” by Chinese people. On that day the



The Kitchen God and the
Kitchen Goddesses



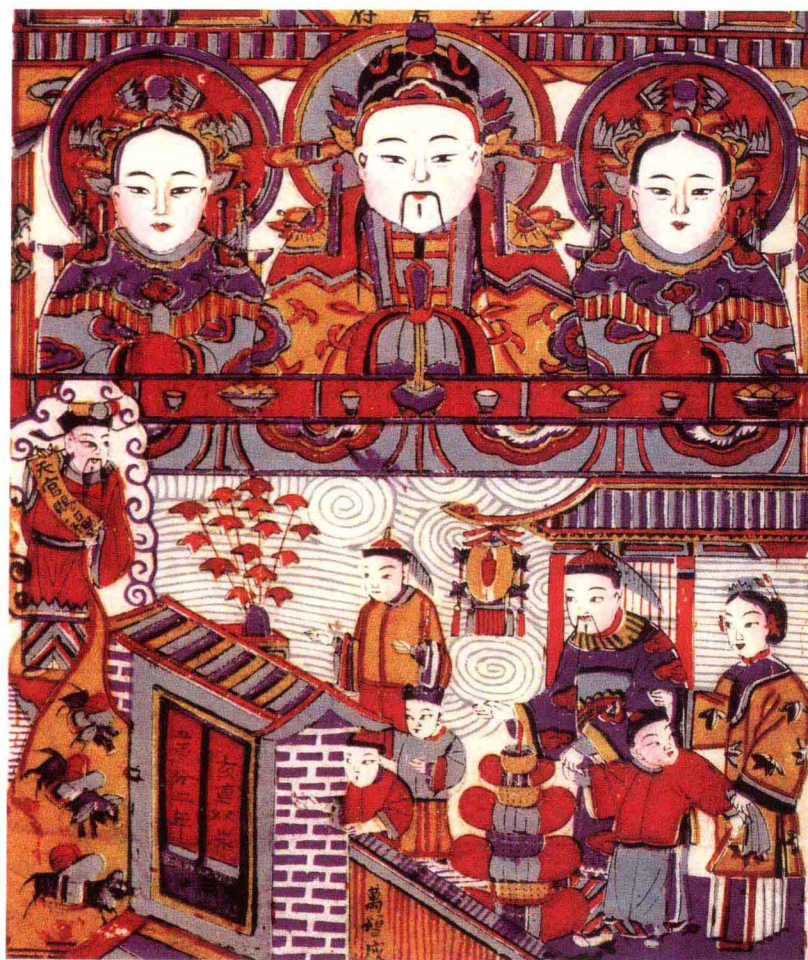


custom of “Offering sacrifices to the Kitchen God” will be performed. According to the traditional custom, every household, rich or poor, posts a picture of the Kitchen God on the wall of the kitchen on this day to see the Kitchen God off. In the past, nearly every household had a shrine for the Kitchen God, who was worshiped as the protective god of the family. Legend has it that the Kitchen God was a deity empowered by the Jade Emperor to take charge of kitchen affairs of the human world. His official title is “Nine-Sky Dongchu Siming Kitchen Magistrate.” “Dongchu Siming” (fortune keeper of the eastern kitchens) is also called “Zao Shen (Kitchen God),” “Zao Jun (Kitchen Magistrate),” “Zao Ye (Kitchen Lord)” or “Lao Zao Ye (Old Kitchen Lord).” The shrine is mostly set on the northern or



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The Kitchen God and the Kitchen Goddesses





Tiger-Head Hat

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eastern sides of the kitchen. In the middle of the shrine is a picture of the Kitchen God. Sometimes the picture includes only the Kitchen God, but it can also include a goddess, who is called the “Kitchen Goddess.” In most cases, a calendar is printed on the picture with such words as “Dongchu Siming Lord,” “God Supervising the Human World” and “Lord of the Family,” which indicates the status of the Kitchen God. The picture is usually flanked by couplets such as “going to Heaven to report good deeds and returning to Earth to protect the family,” “going to Heaven to report good deeds and



The Kitchen God





returning to the palace with luck” or “Lord determining the fortunes of the human world, officially reporting human merits to Heaven.” These are meant to ensure safety for the whole family.

It is said that the Jade Emperor, after hearing reports from the Kitchen God, hands all the families’ fortunes of the coming year to the Kitchen God. Therefore, every household offers maltose (sometimes sesame sugar) when worshiping the Kitchen God so that he could have a sweet feeling to say good words to the Jade Emperor, which may bring the Emperor into a happy mood to give fortunes to each



The Year of the Tiger

New Year picture late Qing Dynasty Yangliuqing Studio in Tianjin

The Kitchen God and the Kitchen Goddess



Tiger-Head Hat

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household in the coming year. The maltose offering to the Kitchen God is very sticky in the mouth. The strip-shaped ones are called "Guandong Sugar", while the oblate ones are called "Sugar Melon". People put the maltose outdoors in winter for the cold weather will make it solid and produce some minute air bubbles inside it, which gives a special flavor to the maltose, crisp, sweet and flaky. Many people believe that the sugar is used for getting the Kitchen God report sweet things to the Jade Emperor, but others think it is used for sticking the Kitchen God's wife's mouth since she is such a gossipmonger. The ceremony of seeing off the Kitchen God is usually held at dusk.

The ceremony of welcoming back the god is usually held in the evening of the last day of the lunar year. It is said that at that time, the Kitchen God returns to Earth bringing all the fortunes and misfortunes that each family deserves.

The people of modern society begin to simplify the Spring Festival customs. Now few household worships the Kitchen God, but eating maltose on the 23rd day of La Month remains a custom. Each year about one week before that day, all sorts of maltose are on the market one after another. It signifies the time of preparing for the



Spring Couplets





Spring Festival is coming.

The Door God, New Year Painting, Spring Couplets and Upside-down Fu Character

During the Spring Festival, every household puts up pictures of Door God, spring couplets, New Year paintings and an upside-down Fu character. The practice is widespread in China, and has a long history. New Year painting and spring couplets, as the names suggest, are pictures and couplets put up during the Spring Festival. They are closely related to each other, both originated from taofu (peach wood charms against evil) in ancient times.

Folklore holds that there was a Mount Dushuo in the East Sea. On the mountain was a huge peach tree with a canopy of branches which extended 1,500 kilometers. Under the branch that stretched eastward, there was a gate through which ghosts entered and exited. Shentu and Yulei, two brothers, were capable of capturing ghosts. They stood by the gate to monitor the ghosts. All ghosts who did evil or harmed people without due cause would be arrested by the brothers, who would bind them with reed ropes and leave them in the mountains to feed tigers. Therefore, in ancient times, people took peach wood and



Tiger-Head Shoes

According to folk customs, tiger-head hats worn by children embody their parents' good wishes for their well-being and good health.



The Gods of the Door: Shentu (right) and Yulei (left)

Duke Qihuan Promotes Ning Qi at Night

New Year painting from Yangliuqing, Tianjin Duke Qihuan (comprising the years 685 to 643BC) was the ruler of the State of Qi during the Spring and Autumn Period. One day, he met a poor noble person called Ning Qi. The king regarded Ning Qi as a great man. So he granted him a title that very night.



爵聖

