

WOODBLOCK NEW YEAR PICTURES OF TAOHUAWU



畫年桃花

桃花坞年画

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桃花坞木版年画

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木版年画是我国特有的一种民间传统艺术，也是我国民族文化的宝贵遗产。由于它最接近人民，又以反映人民生活、愿望为主，所以能广泛流传于民间。在旧社会，劳动人民一年辛苦到头，不得温饱。每到年终岁末，总是祈望来春新岁会有丰收富裕的生活。因此，每逢过年的时候，往往要在家贴上几张喜庆吉利内容的年画，以期待未来；同时，也美化了环境。这种张贴年画的风尚，世代相袭，“过新年，贴新画”的民间习俗，成为劳动人民不可缺少的文化生活的一部分。历代画师和刻工，为此绘刻了无数优美动人的作品，受到人民群众的喜爱。桃花坞自明代以来，就是我国著名的木版年画产地之一，它与天津杨柳青、山东潍坊和四川绵竹的木版年画齐名。桃花坞木版年画无论在内容、构图、雕板、套色等各方面都达到了一定的艺术高度，成为我国广大人民所喜闻乐见的一种民间艺术品。

桃花坞位于江南水乡名城——江苏苏州阊门内。自古以来，由于运河流经这里，往来舟楫甚多。城中有许多酒肆茶社、米行油店，百货杂铺，各路客商云集，致使阊门一带商业发展得异常繁华。木版年画是人们在交易游乐中喜欢选购的商品之一，经过流通往覆，桃花坞的年画远近驰名，甚至影响到了国外。据记载，明末清初，桃花坞木版年画已销售到日本的长崎等地，深得日本人民喜爱。日本的浮世绘，就受到它的启发，进展到一个新的境界。

在明代，南京、无锡、苏州等地都有木版年画的印制。遗憾的是年画每年均需更换，张贴过后，很少有人把它妥善地加以保存，因此，时代久远的作品非常罕见。由于缺乏文字记载和实物的流传，桃花坞木版年画创始于何时，迄今尚无定论。根据解放后有关部门的调查研究，桃花坞木版年画在明末清初已进入繁盛时期，则是肯定无疑的。

木版年画在苏州除桃花坞有作坊、市肆以外，城外的虎丘、山塘和城内的玄妙观也

都有作坊和市肆。太平天国革命时，清兵攻围苏州，虎丘、山塘一带变成战场，大火燃烧了七昼夜，各年画作坊保存的雕版，几乎全部被毁，这是苏州年画发展史上的一次浩劫。以后，年画作坊纷纷迁往桃花坞，但是印制数量已远不如前。

桃花坞木版年画的作坊，在兴盛时期达四五十家之多，有名的如张星聚、张文聚、魏鸿泰、陆福顺、陆嘉顺、张友榕、季永吉、泰源、张湜临、鸣云阁、王荣兴、吴锦增、朱荣记、朱瑞记、墨香斋等。年画作者多署别号，如墨浪子、归来轩主人、桃坞主人等，而真实姓名反到无从查考。至苏州解放前夕，桃花坞木版年画店铺，只剩下朱荣记和朱瑞记两家，景状已十分萧条。

目前从我们所能见到的一些桃花坞木版年画来研究，其内容大致可以归纳为以下几种：辟邪纳福的神像年画，如《门神》、《财神》、《天师》、《福禄寿三星》、《八仙》、《菩萨》、《观音》等；祈求吉祥的年画，如《和气吉祥》、《开市大吉》、《花开富贵》、《丰收图》等；小说戏文的年画，如《刘海戏金蟾》、《唐僧取经》、《三国志》、《杨家将》、《水浒》、《黄鹤楼》、《西厢记》、《霸王别姬》等；风俗画，如《春牛》、《斗鸡图》、《岁朝图》等；时事画，如《刘军克复宣泰大获全（胜）图》、《苏州火车开往吴淞》、《上海通商庆贺总统万岁》等；风景画，如《姑苏玄妙观》、《姑苏报恩寺塔》、《西湖十景全图》、《虎丘灯船胜景图》等。

迷信祈福、仙佛神祇一类内容的年画，可以说是年画的最早形式。人们在封建制度的剥削下，总是把希望寄托在对未来的五谷丰登和生活富裕的幻想上，因此在过去的年画中，占比重最大的是那些既有趣味，又富有吉祥含意的年画，这类年画在民间最受欢迎。例如《和气吉祥》所绘手持和气吉祥字卷的童子，喜笑颜开，给人一种欢乐的感受。反映人们在年节中的快乐情绪和对幸福生活的憧憬。《西湖十景全图》整幅画面绘出十处秀丽的景色，表达了人们对西湖美景的喜爱。在年画中还有表达现实题材的如《刘军克复宣泰大获全（胜）图》就是一幅以近代中法战争为题材、具有历史意义的年画，它描绘了刘永福率领黑旗军打击敌人，屡获大胜的情景，歌颂了中国人民反抗帝国主义侵略的民族精神和不畏强暴的英雄气概。

桃花坞木版年画不但内容丰富、形式多样，而且在表现手法上，各有不同的风格。既有用独幅版画表现一个主题，也有用连环画的形式，把整幅画面分成数格或十数格，将故事情节按顺序先后加以描写。长篇故事还可分绘在两张、三张或四张画幅的小格中，如《新绘武十回前图》、《新绘武十回后图》和《新绘西厢记前本》、《新绘西厢记后本》等。也有的所表现内容情节虽多，但画面并不分格，如《岳武穆精忠报国》、《西湖十景全图》等。这种画幅虽然情节不同，形式各异，但是在绘制时，安排得当，一目了然，较为符合民间欣赏习惯。

桃花坞木版年画之所以受到群众喜爱，是因为它具有丰富的内容，生动的情节，完

美的形象，喜庆的气氛，匀称的构图，鲜明的色彩和贴切的题词等特点。同时由于木版年画产生于民间，大多数作者是民间艺人，他们对人民的思想感情有亲切的体会，对群众的欣赏习惯有深刻的了解，作品反映出来的感情一般是健康、纯朴的，内容亦多为广大人民群众所熟悉的。作者在进行创作时，不但对年画内容加意选择，就是表现形式也多种多样。常用象征手法表现人们的各种愿望；用风俗画的形式，反映人民的意识和生活；用民间传说、历史故事和戏曲神话来教育人民，所以其作品具有较强的生命力。

年画是为了满足人们的精神生活需求而发展起来的一个画种。开始是绘画制作，后来由于雕版技术的发展，特别是明代起，桃花坞等地年画盛行以后，因为需要量大，逐渐从绘画改用木版印制。为了保存其民间绘画韵味，虽用木版套印色彩和线条，但是最后对人物的手、脸等部位，还是用朱、粉等色润染一道。通过烘染的手法，使肌肉获得凹凸的立体质感，人物形象则更加亲切、真实。这样形成了一种既是版画而又保留了绘画传统的民间年画的独特风格。

大概是为了使年画易于销售的缘故，有些年画的画面上还配有唱词。经营年画的商贩，往往喜欢边唱边卖。据记载，售卖《杨家将》年画时有这样的唱词：“捣过两张再两张，前后正本《杨家将》，爹儿八个保君皇。杨大郎，去代王，二郎、三郎死番邦。杨五郎，五台出家做和尚……镇守三关杨六郎。”用极简单的几句词话唱出全本杨家将的故事。《采茶春牛图》、《荡湖船》等也有唱词。这些唱词多是人们熟悉的民间小调，口语化，容易懂，使用唤唱办法，深受广大农村群众的欢迎，特别是农村妇女，他们可以从售画商贩口中，听到一些历史故事和社会上的新鲜事儿，丰富日常的文化生活。

由于年画的内容不同，其用处也各有区别。有的作为神像，挂在堂屋中央供奉，如《观音》；有的贴于大门上，如《门神》，或贴于房门上，如《麒麟送子》、《张仙送子》，这都是人们为了取吉祥、平安之意。也有专为商人、农民、船户等印制的，如《开市大吉》、《采茶春牛图》、《丰收图》等。年画一般是供农历新年期间张贴的喜庆画，也有专供上元（农历正月十五日）、端阳（农历五月五日）、中秋（农历八月十五日）等节日贴挂的。

解放后，有关部门十分关心桃花坞木版年画的发展和繁荣，做了许多调查研究工作。今天，新年画的创作，主要是用现实生活题材，去反映人民的新思想和感情。因此有必要从传统的木版年画中汲取其精华，创作出具有民族和民间风格的优秀新年画，以使这朵民间艺术之花，开放得更加瑰丽多彩，在祖国艺术的百花园中，增添新姿。

Wood-block New Year Picture of Taohuawu

Wood-block New Year pictures are a unique traditional Chinese folk art and valuable cultural heritage of the Chinese people. Since they are close to the people and mainly reflect the life and aspirations of the people, they are popular among the people. In the old society in China laboring people, working hard all year round, could not make both ends meet. Towards the end of the year they longed for a happy life, prosperity and good harvest. On crossing the threshold of the New Year they always pasted a few New Year pictures on the theme of good luck and happiness expressing their desire for a bright future. In so doing they beautified their environment. The practice to paste pictures at the end of the year has handed down from generation to generation, forming a folk custom and an inseparable part of the cultural life of the people. Painters and woodcutters throughout the ages have produced fine pictures that move the people and are loved by the people. Taohuawu has become a center of famous Chinese wood-block new year pictures ever since the Ming Dynasty. It ranks with Yangliuqing near Tianjin and Weifang in Shandong and Mianzhu in Sichuan as the four best components of this art in China. In content, composition, carved board, color process, Taohuawu Wood-block New Year Pictures have reached a high degree of achievement in art. They have become a folk art loved, appreciated and enjoyed by the Chinese people.

Taohuawu lies within the Changmeng Gate, Suzhou, the Venice of the Orient. Innumerable ships plying the Grand Canal pass through Taohuawu since times long ago. Many wine- and tea-shops, rice and edible oil as well as sundry goods shops are located here. Merchants on land and water gather at Taohuawu in large numbers so that the development of commerce is rapid. The wood-block new year pictures are bought and sold by dealers as one of the commodities for exchange or bought during delightful sightseeing trips. In the interflow of goods Taohuawu New Year Pictures become known far and wide and are even displayed in foreign countries. It has been recorded that they were sold in Nagasaki, Japan and were much appreciated by the Japanese people as early as the end of the Ming Dynasty and beginning of the Qing Dynasty. They have also influenced the development of Japanese pictures of the floating world (Ukiyo-e print). As a result, the floating world pictures have developed into a new phase.

Printing facilities for wood-block new year pictures were found in Nanjing, Wuxi and Suzhou during the Ming Dynasty. It is regretted that few people ever took the trouble to preserve the new year pictures after their use, since they had to be replaced with new ones each year. It is rare to find new year pictures dating back to very early times. Lack of written report and material evidence prevents us from determining the exact date for the beginning of the Taohuawu New Year Pictures. According to investigation and research by departments concerned made from the time of the liberation of China, the Taohuawu pictures had entered into a period of great prosperity towards the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. On this point there can be no doubt.

Besides Taohuawu, other new year picture printing shops and stalls can be found in Hu Qiu, Shan Tang, Xuan Miao Guan and elsewhere in Suzhou. During the Tai Ping revolution, the Qing imperial troops encircled Suzhou. Hu Qiu and Shan Tang became battle fields. A huge conflagration broke out, burning seven days and seven nights with the result that all the carved boards in the printing shops were practically destroyed. This is a great catastrophe in the history of the development of the new year pictures in Suzhou. New year picture printing shops were later moved to Taohuawu, but the number of pictures printed there was no longer as big as previously. In the heyday there were 40 to 50 printing shops engaged in making new year pictures at Taohuawu. Among the better known shops are the following: Zhang Xing Ju, Zhang Wen Ju, Wei Hong Tai, Lu Fu Shun, Lu Jia Shun, Zhang You Rong, Ji Yong Ji, Tai Yuan, Zhang Shi Lin, Ming Yun Ge, Wang Rong Xing, Wu Jin Zeng, Zhu Rong Ji, Zhu Rui Ji and Mo Xiang Zhai. The painters of new year pictures usually had pen names. For instance, they would sign themselves as Mo Lang Zi, Gui Lai Xuan Zhu Ren or Taohuawu Zhu Ren. Their real names were lost in oblivion and cannot be checked or verified in the course of investigations. On the eve of China's liberation only two printing shops survived. They were Zhu Rong Ji and Zhu Rui Ji, which were doing rather poor business then.

The content of Taohuawu New Year Pictures as have come to hand can be classified into several categories: on driving away evils and obtaining good fortune, such as: "Door God", "God of Wealth", "Heavenly Teacher", "The three stars — happiness, wealth and longevity", "The eight immortals", "Bodhisattva", "Guangyin or Avalokitesvara"; on good luck themes, such as: "Good-naturedness leads to propitiousness", "auspicious beginning of a new enterprise", "rich and honored, being in full flower", "Good harvest"; on novels and drama, such as: "Liu Hai plays with the golden toad", "Priest Xuan Zang's journey to the west in search of Buddhist sutras", "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms", "Generals of the Yang Family", "Outlaw of the Marsh", "Huang He Lou", "Story of the Western Chamber", "The Conqueror bids farewell to Lady Yu"; genre paintings, such as "clay ox used in ceremony to welcome spring", "cock fighting", "annual tribute"; current topics, such as: "victorious Liu army takes Xuan Tai", "Suzhou train bound for Wusong, Shanghai", "Shanghai celebrates Sun Yat-sen becoming president of China"; on sceneries, such as "Xuan Miao Guan in Suzhou", "Bao En Si pagoda in Suzhou", "ten sceneries at West Lake" and "lantern boats at Hu Qiu, Suzhou".

It may be said that the earliest form of new year pictures are on good luck themes, soliciting good fortune, buddhas, celestials, etc. People living under feudal exploitation system usually place their hopes for an imagined better life with good harvest and wealth in days to come. Consequently, most new year pictures of former days contain good luck themes, which are highly interesting and most welcome by the Chinese people. We see a child holding a scroll of papers with the words: friendliness brings good luck. The child is smiling and gives one a happy feeling. The picture reflects the happy mood of the people in the new year season and their longing for a life of well-being. In the ten sceneries at West Lake the entire space is devoted to the ten beautiful spots, expressing their love for West Lake charms. Among new year pictures there are those that are devoted to themes of real life, such as the victorious Liu army takes Xuan Tai. The picture is based on the Sino-Franco War of 1883—85 and possesses historic meaning. It depicts Liu Yongfu leading his "Black Flag

Army" in giving a sound beating to the enemy and winning victory. It praises the national feeling and dauntless heroic spirit of the Chinese people in resisting imperialistic aggression.

Taohuawu New Year Pictures are not only rich in content, varied in form, but also differ in style of performing technique. It may use a particular wood-block picture to convey a theme, or a series of pictures for the purpose, or divide one picture into many (sometimes more than ten) parts or sections in order to draw different episodes of a story as description. A long story can be drawn in small sections in two, three or four pictures, as is the case in the new presentation of the story of Wu Song (part one and part two) and the story of Western Chamber (part one and part two). In some cases, though the contents and episodes are many, the picture is not divided into sections. This is the case in patriotic general Yue Fei and ten sceneries at West Lake. Pictures such as these containing different episodes and diverse in form, are arranged properly and become clear at a glance to the viewer. They rather conform to the habit of artistic appreciation of the Chinese people.

The reason why Taohuawu Wood-block New Year Pictures are so loved by masses of people is because they are marked by rich content, moving plot, wholesome image, jolly atmosphere, balanced composition, rich color and fitting inscriptions. Since they are produced among the masses of people, their authors for the most part are folk artists, who have gained an intimate understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the people and artistic appreciation of masses. The paintings reflect emotions that are wholesome and pure, with contents familiar to the people. The contents have been well chosen by the author in the process of his creation while the displaying form varies a great deal one from the other. Symbols have been used to express aspirations of the people. The artist uses genre painting to reflect the consciousness and life of the people. With episodes from history and dramatic mythology he educates the people. On these account new year paintings possess a stronger vitality.

New year picture is a new category in painting created in response to the demand for cultured life by the people and has developed as such. In the beginning pictures were painted. Due to the development of wood-carving, especially during the Ming Dynasty in which Taohuawu Pictures were very popular and in great demand, paintings were changed to woodcut printing. In order to keep the flavor of folk painting, woodcut coloring process and lines were employed, added with shell powder and cinnabar. By means of stoving and dyeing the painters obtain a third dimensional effect from the flesh of characters, whose images become all the more intimate, close and genuine. A unique style combining the characteristics of woodcut as well as traditional Chinese folk painting has therefore come into being.

Probably it is to make new year pictures more saleable that some pictures have been inscribed with libretto. Merchants and hawkers engaged in trade like to sing as they sell the pictures to customers. Hawkers selling pictures on Generals of the Yang Family sing in the following manner (according to one record): As I turn over two pictures and yet another two pictures on part one and part two of Generals of the Yang Family, I find father and seven sons — all eight come to the defence of the emperor. Yang Da Lang impersonated the emperor to negotiate with the invading forces. Yang Er Lang and Yang San Lang were killed in action in defending their country. Yang Wu Lang became a monk at Wutai Mountain. Yang Liu Lang went to defend three passes . . .

Using a few words like these in the libretto the story is given in a nutshell by the hawker to the customers.

"Picking tea leaves and clay ox to welcome spring" and picture like "sailing on a boat in the lake" are accompanied by libretto, which are ditties popular among folks and sung in vernacular. They are easy to understand. The singers take part in singing by turns and are most welcome by peasants, in particular, women in the countryside, who learn from the mouth of picture hawkers, historical anecdotes and novelties in society, thereby enriching their cultural life.

Inasmuch as the content of new year pictures differ, the pictures are used for different purposes. Some are used as portraits of gods and enshrined in Chinese halls, such as the picture of Guan Yin. Some are pasted on main doors, as is the case of door deities. Some are placed above the door ways, such as unicorn bringing sons to the family and Zhang, the heavenly teacher brings sons. These are all intended as good luck pictures or on peace and tranquility.

Some pictures have been printed entirely for businessmen, or peasants or boatmen, such as opening market, picking tea leaves and clay ox to welcome spring and harvest scene.

As a rule new year pictures are intended for lunar new year. Some, nevertheless, are hung on the 15th day of the first month. Some are for Dragon Boat Festival, which falls on the 5th day of the fifth month and on Mid-Autumn Festival, which is the 15th day of the eighth month.

Ever since China's liberation in 1949 care and concern have been shown by government departments concerned to Taohuawu New Year Pictures—to their development and prosperity. Many investigations have been carried out for this purpose. Today new year pictures at Taohuawu are based on themes of real life, reflecting the new thoughts and feelings of the people. It is deemed necessary to absorb the quintessence of traditional pictures and to create new and better pictures that are national and folk in style so as to let China's new year pictures bloom in the hundred-flower garden of Chinese art more beautifully than ever before with a new look that marks our era.

(Translated by He Fei)

祈致吉祥年画



姑苏桃花坞

2 福字图



3 天齐洪福



4 寿字八仙



5 福寿双全



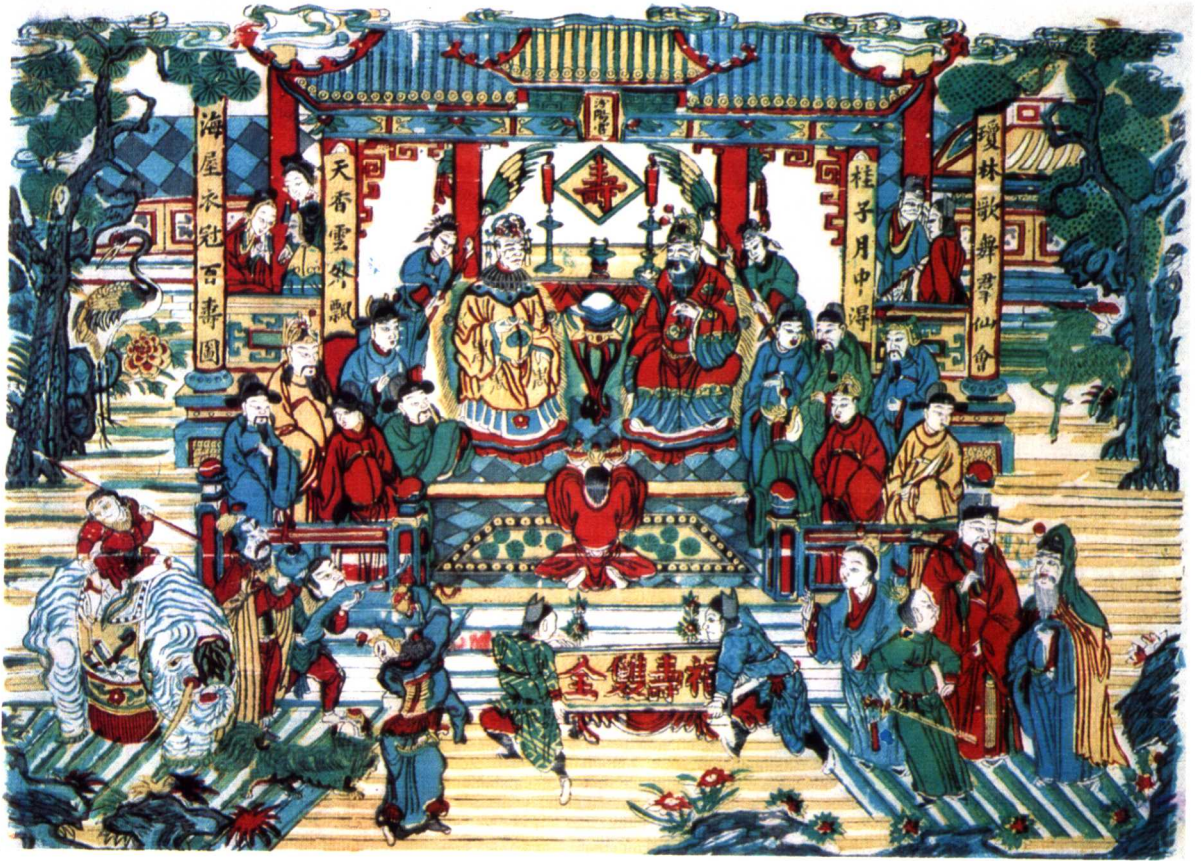


6 关公



7 赐福财神





8 福寿双全

9 双龙戏珠





11 共乐昇平得利图



