

A Family Tradition that Portrays Families in Paintings Without Painting any  
Family Pictures

The Nianhua of Mianzhu, Sichuan

The articles in this volume approach the relationship between Chinese art and the Chinese family (or *jia*) from two directions. Seen from one angle, families constitute the arts. Family traditions in media, techniques, styles, and markets are passed down along the patrilineal axis of inheritance and succession, and are sometimes combined with other styles and other clienteles that enter the family through artistic alliances created through marriage (see chapters by Weitz, Clunas, Lippit). Seen from the other angle, arts constitute the family. *Honglou Meng* paints a word portrait of both the lavish and complex compounds and courtyards of the Jia family and the equally complex relationships of the family members (Edwards); ancestor pictures emphasize the vertical, patriarchal structure that constitutes the backbone of the Chinese family ideal (Ching); paintings of frolicking children show that both the *jia* as building and the *jia* as kin group still leave room for joy and spontaneity (Wicks). It helps, when looking at the relationship between family and art from both these directions, to consider that *jia* means three kinds of things: both the family as a group of living and dead people, the houses and other buildings that they live in, and a school or tradition of an art such as painting. Whether the *jia* constitutes art or art constitutes the *jia*, the *jia* we are writing about is at the same time a family, a house, and an artistic school.

The *nian hua*, or New Year Pictures, of Mianzhu County, Sichuan, are an art form that both emerges from the *jia*, in all three of these senses, and depicts

the *jia*, in two of the senses. *Nianhua* in Mianzhu are a family tradition, developed, maintained, and transmitted through patrilineal and affinal ties. They are also an artistic school, clearly differentiated, as Ellen Laing has shown (2002: 9, 50-51; lecture at Burke Museum, February 2004), from similar *Nianhua* traditions practiced in other parts of China. And they are created in the family farmhouses of the rich agricultural lands of Mianzhu, in the heart of the Chengdu Plain. At the same time, *nianhua* are about families: by their content and by their placement in different parts of the farmhouse and courtyard, they portray elements of the ideal structure of the *jia* both as a group of people and as a structured arrangement of rooms, gates, and doorways, showing very literally the close structural parallels between the kin group and the house it inhabits. As an anthropologist, I must leave to my art historian colleagues the questions what constitutes a *jia* in the sense of a school of painting or a style of painting with family resemblances; I am also not competent to analyze the more technical questions of style, color, technique, and possible influences of other genres of New Year pictures of folk painting in general. Instead, I concentrate on the connections between the family that creates the art and the way that the art defines the family.

## FAMILY CONSTITUTES ART: THE CHEN FAMILY TRADITION OF MIANZHU

*The tradition of Nianhua and its connection to the New Year as the family holiday par excellence*

Celebrations of the New Year can be traced back to pre-imperial times in China; and since at least the Tang period there has been a practice of posting some sort of pictures as part of the general cleansing and renewal of the household that takes place at the time of New Years. Commercial production and sale of such pictures seems to have begun in the late Ming, accompanying the general commercialization and marketization of society at the time, as well as the development of printing technologies and networks of distribution for books and other printed matter, as well as works of art. From that time forward, centers of *nianhua* production developed in many provinces, including Guandong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Shandong, Hebei, Shanxi and Shaanxi, as well as Sichuan. Most of those centers consisted of clusters of households, often related patrilineally and afinally, who turned out large numbers of paintings for sale through a variety of methods. Most prominent among these were *shuiyin*, an early version of four-color printing techniques, where multiple woodblocks were inked with different colors and printed in successive overlays to create a multicolored print (as at Yangjiabu in Shandong); and outline and fill-in processes, where a kind of line-drawing outline was printed from a carved wooden block, and all the colors were filled by brush with watercolors (as in Mianzhu). The techniques could be combined for greater subtlety and sophistication, as in Yangliuqing in what is now Tianjin Municipality, and various kinds of stamping processes could be used to add color, detail, or highlights.<sup>1</sup>

Nianhua can be grouped into a series of broad genres, many of which

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent recent art-historical treatment of *nianhua*, see Laing 2002.

emphasize the relationship between the pictures and the *jia* as a family group and as a house. The most prominent are probably door gods (*menshen*), resembling those found in temples and other public buildings, protective deities often of military mien and outfit, who defend the buildings within the doors from outside threats. They usually come in pairs. Protective charms, in the form of eight trigrams, magical animals such as tigers, or other talismans, also guard the *jia* against evil influences, but by magical rather than military means. Didactic pictures such as the ten busynesses of men (*nan shi mang*) or of women (*nü shi mang*) show the ideal activities of a family. Pictures of scenes from operas or the folktales from which operas are taken not only remind family members of their favorite stories and entertainments, but also teach moral lessons about the family values of the Chinese ideal. Certain comic pictures satirize aspects of the family ideal, as in the sparrows' wedding from Mianzhu described below, while others are less closely connected to specific family concerns, poking fun at landlords or other easy targets of ridicule. Finally, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, topical and political *nianhua* emerged, and production centers in Tianjin and Suzhou in particular made intricate prints of scenes from the Boxer Rebellion among other historical events.<sup>2</sup>

*A brief history of the Nianhua of Mianzhu*

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<sup>2</sup> For general treatments, see Wang 2002, Pu 1989. For Yangliuqing in Tianjin, see Pan et al. 1976. Online collections for Yangjiabu in Shandong can be found at <http://www.xabusiness.com/china-stamps-2005/2005-4.htm> and <http://www.infobase.gov.cn/sdgd/sd7/nianhua/mb1.htm>; for Shanxi at <http://www.tydao.com/sxsu/jieri/nianhua/nianhua.htm>. A brief treatment of Mianzhu pictures may be found at [http://www.womenofchina.cn/quintessential\\_china/crafts/11705.jsp](http://www.womenofchina.cn/quintessential_china/crafts/11705.jsp) All websites worked on the Fourth of July, 2007.

Mianzhu county is located about 70 kilometers north of the Sichuanese capital of Chengdu, in the heart of the fertile Chengdu plain, which is the economically most developed region in western China, a center of both grain and cash-cropping agriculture for more than two millennia, and a region well-served by both land and water transport. Perhaps as early as the late Ming, Mianzhu families began producing *nianhua* for sale, though the earliest examples now held by the Mianzhu Nianhua Museum in the county town date from the Qianlong era (1736-96) of the Qing dynasty.<sup>3</sup>

I visited Mianzhu twice, in 2001 and again in 2002, and conducted interviews with Mr. Hu Guanggui, director of the Mianzhu Nianhua Museum, and with artists working out of the museum. I visited the Chen family painters in Qingdao Township twice, observing the process of printing and painting, and interviewing them about their pictures, their history, and their family business. I also made one visit to the Li family painters of Gongxing Township. I purchased examples of all the Chen family's available pictures, both as completed pictures and as printed outlines as yet unpainted (over 60 objects in all), as well as ten of the woodblocks from which the pictures are made, along with a few pictures from the museum gift store and two pictures from the Li family. All these collections are housed in the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the University of Washington,<sup>4</sup> and were exhibited at that

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Mr. Hu Guanggui, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> For an online catalogue of these materials, see <http://www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/collections/ethnology/collections/search.php?query=mianzhu&mode=keywords&ethno=1&archives=1&view=thumbs&perPage=25&offset=0>

Museum at a New Year celebration in February, 2004.<sup>5</sup> Information in this chapter for which no formal citations are given comes from interviews with Mr. Hu and members of the Chen and Li families.<sup>6</sup>

Members of Mianzhu painting families remember their immediate pre-revolutionary situation fondly. They say that *nianhua* production was concentrated in two districts, the southern and northern roads (*nan lu* and *bei lu*) named according to their situation relative to the county town. Each area was reported to have several hundred families engaged in *nianhua* production; they were sold in both rural and county-town markets during the few weeks preceding the New Year, and most families in the area bought a full set to adorn the doors and rooms of their compounds. This tradition continued up until the time of collectivization in the late 1950s; it is not clear whether, as in some places, traditional content was supplanted or supplemented by more revolutionary themes.

All this changed, however, with collectivization, and in the late 1950s and 1960s many of the master painters were themselves collectivized, and organized into a cooperative at the county cultural center (*wenhua guan*); during this time the content of the pictures indeed shifted from traditional themes to revolutionary ones, and the Mianzhu Nianhua Museum includes several examples of *nianhua* extolling the Great Leap Forward, the People's Communes, Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, and other socialist iconography. During the tumultuous years of the Cultural Revolution, *nianhua* production in Mianzhu

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<sup>5</sup> A review of this exhibit can be found at <http://www.nwasianweekly.com/editorial/gods.23.03.htm>; accessible July 4, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> For help in driving, interviewing, collecting, and bargaining, I am indebted to Li Xingxing, Huo Wei, Li Yongxian, and Xing Jinyuan.

was stopped altogether; it was revived in the early 1970s, when the painters were organized into the Mianzhu Nianhua Association (*mianzhu nianhua xiehui*), which controlled the production and marketing of the pictures. Painters were required to sell through the Association, which set the prices. With the market reforms of the 1980s, these prices did not keep up with the general inflation of consumer prices, meaning that most painting families abandoned their traditional occupation, leaving only a few to carry on the art. The Association was abolished when the Museum was built in 1996.

Since the building of the Museum, the tradition has been carried on there, where painters train apprentices and the gift shop sells a variety of paintings; and in a few families, represented by the Chens in the Southern Route (now renamed the *nan pai*, or "southern school"), and the Lis in the similarly renamed *bei pai*. But it is now, in Joseph Levenson's famous formulation, more traditionalistic than traditional, subject to "the petrification of tradition by traditionalists" (Levenson 1968 I: xxx). It has gained a new lease on life as *nianhua* have become valorized as a folk art and as a source of attention and potential tourism and art-collector revenue for the remaining painting families and for the museum. The Chen family is regularly visited by domestic and foreign collectors, but very few local families still buy the traditional pictures. They are much more expensive than the mass-produced ones from Chengdu or more distant places which are now the majority of *nianhua* sold on the streets of Mianzhu before the lunar New Year. The Burke Museum certainly contributed to this trend of traditionalization when I purchased *nian hua* and related materials in 2001 and 2002.

Perhaps ironically, then, but fittingly nonetheless, *nianhua* production in

Mianzhu has come full-circle, or rather full-spiral; from family production with familistic content for family consumption, to collective production with revolutionary content for family consumption, back to family production with family content for touristic and art-collector consumption, with family consumption accounting for very little of the market. The family themes portrayed in Mianzhu *nianhua* have become in some ways a kind of vehicle of folkloristic nostalgia, but at the same time the family enterprises producing them continue in ways that show clear continuity with their pre-revolutionary processes.

*C. The process of nianhua production and reproduction in the Chen family*

For the Chens of Qingdao Township, south of the county town of Mianzhu, *nianhua* production is a thriving family business in the early 21st century. Mr. Chen Xincan, born in 1921, was lean, lithe, and lively when we visited him in 2001 and 2002. He continues his role as artist, master, entrepreneur and raconteur to the occasional domestic and foreign guests who constitute his clientele. He learned his craft from a classificatory uncle, beginning at the unusually late age of 16, and has continued, except for the Cultural Revolution interruption, to the present day. He is a skilled technician rather than an innovator or a creative artist. His repertoire of about 40 different pictures is entirely inherited from his recent ancestors; whether door gods, magic charms, or entertaining pictures, all his works are created by a mechanical process of reproduction. He makes the tools to carve his woodblocks; carves the blocks, and supervises the process of printing, all without changing a thing. If a printing

block wears out (or is purchased by a collector), he traces the design from an available print onto a suitable wooden blank and makes an exact copy of the old block, which will in turn produce an exact replica of the prints made from the previous blocks. His only deviations from previous models come in enlarging or reducing the size of the carved images on the blocks, a process which, he states, has been much easier since the advent of photocopy machines in the county seat.

The pictures are produced in a kind of assembly line process. The blocks are made of durable hardwoods such as pear, birch, or ginkgo. They are carved on both sides; the two faces of a block typically depicting the two members of a set of military or civil door gods, or two slightly larger story pictures. The four corners of the block are left uncarved so that it can be set down on either side without getting ink on the table surface. Mr. Chen makes most of the prints himself, carefully coating the block surface with a brush dipped in black ink, placing a sheet of artisan paper from the papermaking county of Jiajiang (Eyferth 2003) on top of the block, and rubbing a smooth piece of wood over the surface to darken the image, then peeling the paper off and setting it aside to dry.

**Figure 1: A printing block (Photo copyright Burke Museum).**



**Figures 2-4: Master Chen Xincan prepares a print (photos by the author)**





The block-print itself is only an outline; it must be filled in with watercolors by brush to make a finished picture, and this is where the family enterprise comes in. Mr. Chen is assisted most prominently by his second son Chen Yunlu, who also is employed as a painter and instructor of apprentices at the Nianhua Museum. But many members of the family know how to do the painting (which, like the design, never varies in color or pattern), including the eldest son and his wife, Chen Yunlu's wife, and one of the three young daughters who are not yet married out of the family. When we visited the Chens in 2002, Chen Xincan's eldest grandson, 16-year old high school student Chen Gang, was applying the colors along with two 15-year old matrilineal cousins from the Tang family in the same village. They were apprentices learning their craft and not being paid any wages for their work.

**Figure 5: An outline block print before color is applied (Photo copyright Burke Museum)**



**Figure 6: A Young Apprentice applies color to the prints (Photo by the author)**



After the painted colors are applied, "gold and silver flowers" (*jinyin hua*) can be stamped on top as fancy finishing touches, and the print is put away for sale to visitors or at the next New Year season. As a family enterprise employing family and affinal labor, the Chens' painting business has few production costs other than paper, ink, and paint. The pictures are sold for 4-5 *yuan* per pair, and with about 400-500 or perhaps more pairs sold per year, they make a yearly income of ¥2000-3000 on top of their agricultural income. This is a substantial supplement for an agricultural family in this area, but hardly enough to release them from full-time farming; *nianhua* production for them, as probably for their ancestors before the revolution, is a supplement to the family income rather than a source of basic livelihood.

The Li family of Gongxing township appears to operate on similar principles. They emphasize that their school, the so-called *bei pai*, differs from their southern counterparts in that they paint on a vertical easel or wall, rather

than flat on a table, but the same basic process of block-printing the outline and then painting with watercolor and stamping. Seventy-something Li Fangfu, the family master, learned as an apprentice from a non-relative, but now his enterprise too is worked with family labor, and his grandsons are already apprenticing to the craft.

Figure 7: Master Li Fangfu with one of his grandson-apprentices (Photo by the author)



#### ART CONSTITUTES THE FAMILY: THE STRUCTURING OF *JIA* IN AND BY MIANZHU *NIANHUA*

If the families of Mianzhu artisans create or constitute their artistic output, the content and placement of the pictures they create also constitute the *jia* both in

the sense of the household and in the sense of the family group. To understand this, we must look at the structure of the typical family compound, the four-sided courtyard or *siheyuan* of farm families on the Chengdu Plain, and at the ways in which these houses contain and reproduce the families that live within them. One of the best ways to do this is to look at each type of *nianhua*, its content and its placement in the family courtyard, as illustrated here; This configuration was explained to me by 71-year old Ms. Tian, the wife of Master Chen Xingcai.

**Figure 8: The configuration of a Mianzhu farm courtyard, showing possible placements of *nianhua* (Diagram by Andrew Whiteman, Burke Museum).**



The most prevalent kind of *nianhua* produced by both the Chen and Li families in Mianzhu is the military door-god. The Chens produce over ten different pairs of military guardian deity pictures, each with characteristic dress, headgear, weapons, and pose, and produced as a pair in contrasting colors. These military guardians are used to protect the family as a unit from outside attacks, whether by malevolent spirits or by criminals, so their armaments and their postures are central to their function. They are placed at locations where the family meets the outside: at the front and back gates of the compound, where the private world of the family meets the public world of the street (in front and sometimes in back) or of the fields (usually in back).

**Figure 9: A pair of military door gods (Photo copyright Burke Museum)**



Next in line, and also belonging to the broad genre of door gods, are the

civil officials. Some of these look like dignified old men, and others, depicting younger scholars, seem somewhat effeminate to our eyes, but their role is not to guard the family's boundaries, but to bring it good fortune, traditionally through success in the imperial civil service examinations that led their subjects to officialdom, and currently through school or business success. Hence their poses are dignified rather than threatening, they are unarmed, and most significantly they are placed not at the outer boundaries of the physical space of the *jia* building, but rather on the doors that lead from the outdoor courtyard, inside the compound walls, into the main guest room, or *keting* of the family house, and sometimes on the courtyard doors that enter directly into the living quarters of the nuclear families that make up the larger extended household living in the compound. It is through these boundaries that family members pass toward

**Figure 10: A pair of civil official door-gods (photo copyright Burke Museum)**



success in the outer world, and it is through the doors of the guest hall that visitors are welcomed.

More common on the doors to individual family bedrooms, as well as on kitchen doors, are a third and fourth kind of door gods, the female generals (*nüjiang*) and the gold and money children (*jinqian tongzi*), each associated with female power, fertility, and the female realm of bedrooms and family quarters. The *nüjiang* in the Chen family repertoire are figures well-known to folktales and operas, Mu Guiying and Liang Hongyu. Mu is renowned for having brought together a large number of generals of the Northern Song in a valiant and ultimately unsuccessful charge against an army of the conquering Liao Khitan "barbarians," and is represented in many *nianhua* traditions (ref?). Liang also fought for the Song, but against the Jurchens of the Jin (ancestors of the Manchus). While her husband led a decoy detachment on the seaside, Liang beat an enormous battle-drum to rally a larger force for a successful inland attack. The Gold and Money Children, merrily juggling coins and precious stones, symbolize increase--not only the fertility that emanates from women and bedrooms, but also the increase in family fortunes.

**Figure 11: The female generals Mu Guiying and Liang Hongyu (photo copyright Burke Museum)**



**Figure 12: Gold and Money Children posted on an interior door (photo by the author)**



All these openings, however well guarded or enriched by door gods, are

still possibly vulnerable to supernatural attack, and to defend against this families sometimes post pictures of magic talismans such as the *bagua* or "eight trigrams" in this case accompanied by a guardian tiger.

**Figure 13: The Eight Trigrams and a guardian Tiger posted above a doorway (photo by the author)**



The last part of the family that needs a guardian or sponsor is the animal quarters; indeed the *jia* as a building and as a family corporation, especially the farm family, is incomplete without its stables and animals. And who better to guard the animals than the cleverest animal who ever lived, the Monkey King, the Ape of the Mind, Sun Wukong, who wields his magic cudgel to protect and nurture the family pigs in the Mianzhu compound?

**Figure 14: Sun Wukong Guards the Pigpen (photo by the author)**



The repertoire of *nianhua* produced by the Chens of Mianzhu can thus be deployed to construct a symbolic universe of family structure. Unified and protected from the outside by compound walls, whose vulnerable spaces are reinforced by door-gods and magic charms. Cooperating in the interest of wealth and status in the public arena, which is allowed into the family space in the guest room, where it presents the public image of scholarly success through the benign civilian door gods. Nurtured and reproduced by the women, whose domain is the kitchens and bedrooms, protected and enriched by the powerful female generals and the gold and money children whose wealth brings fertility. And supported and fed by the family animals, guarded by history's smartest animal.

But at the same time, the ideal *jia* is not just paired physical and kinship structures, it is also the group that spends pleasant times together in protected and pleasant surroundings (see Wicks, this volume). It is in these surroundings that the fun pictures are posted, on the walls of any of the spaces where members

of the family gather to chat, tell stories, and do domestic chores. The Chens of Mianzhu include among their painted prints several folkloric pictures suitable for such intimate family spaces. Significantly, they are not produced or posted in pairs like the door gods, but individually and without regard for strict rules of placement. Two are shown here. One is entitled "the sparrows marry their daughter," (*maque jia nü*) recounting a story in which the mother of the sparrow family, over-ambitious to marry her daughter up, arranges a wedding with the cat family. The sumptuous bridal and dowry procession here proceeds apace, unaware that the prospective son-in-law is about to eat them all up.

**Figure 15: The Sparrows marry off their daughter (unfinished outline print; photo copyright Burke Museum)**



Another is a traditional picture that was given a new revolutionary meaning in the late 20th century, and is entitled Three Monkeys Trick the Pig, or *san hou tang zhu*. The pig, so absorbed in the pretty girls who wait on him and the fine food and smoke (tobacco or opium?) they proffer, is oblivious to the three monkeys passing cards under the table, about to bilk him out of a portion of his presumably ill-gotten gains. It is not recorded exactly how this picture was interpreted in pre-revolutionary times; perhaps it was a fable about the dangers of excess and indulgence in opposition to the Confucian ethic of frugality, a parody of a nouveau-riche who is tempted to show and waste his wealth rather than shepherding it for future generations, or even a warning about what would come of a wealthy man who devotes more time to his concubines than to his wife and children. In the Communist interpretation, the picture collapses to a single interpretation: it becomes a metaphor for class struggle, with the pig of course representing the evil landlord, and the monkeys, the clever peasants, engaging in acts of everyday resistance (Scott 1985). Whether it is once again becoming a parable about the nouveau-riches of today's era of Reform and Opening is hard to say, but like the landlords of old, some of them will become collectors of folk arts and buy copies of the picture.

Figure 16: Three Monkeys Trick the Pig (photo copyright Burke Museum)



As a final example of Mianzhu *nianhua* designed for family enjoyment rather than reinforcing family structure, we can look at the famous "girl on a bicycle" picture that stems from the late 19th or early 20th century, and belongs perhaps to the same genre as the pictures of battles with foreigners in the Boxer Rebellion produced by the *nianhua* printers of Tianjin, Shandong, and Suzhou. As Mr. Hu of the Nianhua Museum explains it, perhaps someone from Chengdu, which was fairly innocent of such modern contrivances as bicycles well into the

20th century, must have gone to Shanghai and seen the startling but promising spectacle of young ladies on bicycles, and come back to Sichuan with the news, trying to use the *nianhua* as a medium of communication. But he or she couldn't quite get the mechanism right, as close inspection of the picture will indicate. Still, given the strict adherence to tradition that is so much a part of the Chen family production process, as well as the appeal to tradition which sells Mianzhu *nianhua* in this age of commodified folklore, the picture is reproduced precisely to this day, and she still rides a machine that could never go anywhere.

**Figure 17: Girl on a Bicycle (photo copyright Burke Museum)**



## CONCLUSION: FOLKLORE, FOLK ART, AND THE CONTINUATION OF A (COMMODIFIED) FAMILY TRADITION.

Over the past 50 years, the tradition of Mianzhu *nianhua*, like the families that produce it, has gone through a series of wrenching transitions; from family art to socialist co-opted folk art back to family art, but this time with a difference. Except during the socialist interlude of the Nianhua Association, New Year pictures have always been a family business, passed down in the family, supported by family labor, and a source of family income. And this family business, as I have outlined above, produced pictures that glorified and spatialized an ideal model of the Chinese family.

But the present brings a paradox to the *nianhua* of Mianzhu. Once again, they are a family business, and they are still constructing the family ideal, as Ms. Tian articulated to me so clearly in her oral catalogue of genres and placements. But that family ideal is on its way out in China. The Chen and Li families still work as extended-family cooperatives, each living in a single compound, but such families are becoming increasingly rare in rural China (Wang 2004, Yan 2003). The family ideal that is portrayed in the arrangement of pictures is a nostalgic one, and this may be one reason, in addition to expense, that the Chen and Li families report that not many local families buy their traditional pictures. They depend instead for their market on buyers who view them explicitly as part of a folk-art tradition. When I purchased one each of all the Chens' available prints, my colleagues from the Sichuan University Museum bought several hundred pictures, intending to sell them as folk arts in their gift shop.

In a paradoxical sense, this process has moved *nianhua*, an archetypical folk art, into the realm of (unmodified) art, which no longer serves an organic societal function, structuring and structured by the family, but becomes instead a detached representation, something to be viewed rather than to be lived. However famous Mianzhu pictures were as one of China's Four Great New Year Picture Centers (along with Yangliuqing, Yangjiabu, and Taojiawu), there were no museums devoted to them in pre-revolutionary or even socialist China. But like so many things that we now refer to as "traditions," *nianhua* from all these famous centers have moved out of the society into the museum (Levenson 1968: III 76-82). As James Flath describes in his study of North Chinese *nianhua* centers, *nianhua* just about everywhere have changed from an organic art form into a commercial one, to be displayed in museums, collected by connoisseurs, studied by scholars, published and analyzed in books (Flath 2002, chs. 6 and 7). Whether locally in Mianzhu town (where the museum produces, displays, and sells them) regionally at Sichuan University (where the museum sells them and may display them sometime) or at the Burke Museum in Seattle, which displayed them for a reconstructed American holiday called Chinese New Year, as well as on its website, *nianhua* have, as Flath puts it, experienced a "transition from part of everyday life to conspicuous tradition" (2002: 151). In addition, with the publication of this chapter, Mianzhu *nianhua* will join their fellows from more famous centers in foreign art books, and it is quite possible that it will be primarily in art books or souvenir stores that future inhabitants of the Northern and Southern routes will see them.

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