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## 10 Foreigners and Foreign Realities on Traditional Chinese Woodblock Prints of the Late 19th–Early 20th Centuries

**Abstract.** This chapter highlights the theme of mutual images between China and, first of all, the Western powers at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries when there was an unprecedented expansion of contacts between the parties. The question of the appearance of new visual images of foreigners and foreign realities in China during this period is studied through the prism of traditional Chinese folk woodblock printing art – *nianhua* 年畫 (New Year pictures), which, in contrast to traditional academic painting, has very vividly responded to changing historical realities. This article also provides a classification of *nianhua*, in particular, the following categories of images with “foreigners and foreign phenomena” on them: woodblock prints associated with the activities of Christian missionaries in China, well-wishing pictures with images of Western realities, as well as images on historical and political topics that became particularly popular in the early 20th century.

The research is based, first of all, on the richest collection of Chinese folk paintings kept in the museums of St. Petersburg: the State Hermitage Museum; the State Museum of the History of Religion; the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Kunstkamera); and the Russian Geographical Society, which is based on the collection of the famous Russian academic V.M. ALEKSEEV.

**Keywords.** China, Foreigners, Mutual images, *Nianhua* prints, ALEKSEEV.

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In recent decades, both in the Western as well as in the Russian and Chinese studies of international relations, there has been a shift in the study of political history in favor of studying the history of cultural interaction and the formation of mutual images between different states. For example, Igor' Vasil'evich SLEDZEVSKIĪ, a famous Russian scholar and specialist in African studies, notes that the comparison of “national images, ideas, models and development projects produced both at the interstate level and at the level of mass consciousness and popular culture” became an “integral feature of world transformations in the 20th century”<sup>1</sup>. In the 21st century, it can be seen how mutual images continue to have a significant impact on relations between individual states and nations. In the era of the “clip culture”, this statement becomes especially relevant to visual images.

As for China's relations with Russia and the West, the active stage of the formation of mutual visual images between the parties began in the second half of the 19th century, with the expansion of mutual contacts and the emergence of new touchpoints but also thanks to the development of communications and printing technology. Turning to popular culture in Russia and the West, one can suggest that the most vivid image of China was manifested in the pages of various satirical cartoons so popular among readers of those years. In China itself, according to many experts, the outlook for relations with foreigners began to change after the period of the Opium Wars. Even though it is known that by the end of the Qing dynasty, a large part of the Chinese population was still skeptical about the achievements of the “barbarians” and did not want to learn from them, some scientists believe that as early as the 17th century, certain representatives of the Chinese elite from imperial China “abandoned the ‘civilised-barbaric matrix’”<sup>2</sup>.

As noted by famous Russian specialist in Chinese art Tat'iana Igorevna VINOGRADOVA, “v techenie mnogikh vekov zhivushchie za predelami Sredinnoĭ imperii risovalis' na strani'skikh kitaĭskikh knig soglasno traditsii, voskhodiashcheĭ k drevneĭ «Knige gor i moreĭ», t.e. fantasticheskimi antropomorfnyimi sushchestvami s raznym naborom konechnostei i golovami prichudlivykh ochertaniĭ” (“for many centuries those who lived outside the *Zhongguo* 中國 (Central State) were

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1 I.V. SLEDZEVSKIĪ: *Mental'nye obrazy v mezhdunarodnykh sopostavleniĭakh i modelirovaniĭ global'nogo budushchego* (Mental images in international comparisons and modeling a global future). In: *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* (Social science and contemporary world), vol. 4, Moscow: Science 2008, p. 71.

2 Ronald Chung-yam PO: “Maritime countries in the Far West: Western Europe in Xie Qinggao's Records of the Sea (c. 1783–93)”. In: *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, vol. 21 no. 6, London: Taylor and Francis 2014, pp. 857–870, there on p. 859.

painted on the pages of Chinese books according to a tradition dating back to *Shan Hai Jing* 山海經 (The Classic of Mountains and Seas), i.e. unrealistic anthropomorphic creatures with a different set of limbs and heads of bizarre outlines”).<sup>3</sup> However, the growth of direct contacts between Asia and Europe, which was due, inter alia, to the development of navigation during the Ming dynasty, led to a significant increase in the number of publications related to foreigners. Since the 16th century, various illustrated ethnographic treatises that introduced local readers to the customs of foreigners were widely circulated in China. The primary audience belonged to the officials who had to serve in places of contact with foreign culture.

According to HE Yuming, a modern Taiwanese specialist in book history of imperial China, one of the most popular publications of this kind in those years was a treatise named *Luochong lu* 羸蟲錄 (Record of naked creatures) that was widespread among a large number of readers in different circles of society since the 16th century. The treatise is a printed text that collects images and descriptions of more than one hundred species of *luochong* 羸蟲 (literally, naked creatures), also known as *yi* 夷 (barbarians, foreigners). The articles of the treatise, organized under the headings for the various *guo* 國 (states), cover countries in Asia and the Indian Ocean region, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. The researcher notes that the text focuses mainly on *waiyi* 外夷 (external barbarians) living outside the *Zhongguo*, but it also covers various ethnic groups in the area, including legendary countries mentioned in earlier Chinese texts, such as *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. Moreover, like this treatise, with which it was often used together during the Ming times, *Luochong lu* stresses not only written reports on exotic peoples, but also on “weird” images, which was closely linked to the flourishing of the *banhua* 版畫 the print illustration industry at the time.<sup>4</sup> HE Yuming also names another treatise of this kind – *Dongyi tushuo* 東夷圖說 (Pictures and Descriptions of Eastern Barbarians), commissioned in 1586 by the Provincial Administration vice commissioner of Guangdong province CAI Ruxian 蔡汝賢. Some of the illustrations in this treatise were copied from earlier sources, some were newly added, such as the Portuguese.<sup>5</sup>

The Norwegian Sinologist Erling AGØY in his work on the description of foreigners in traditional Chinese historical and literary works emphasizes the

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3 T.I. VINOGRADOVA: “« Nekitaiskie » kitaiskie narodnye kartiny (« Non-chinese » Chinese folk paintings)”. In: *Kiunerovskii sbornik* (Kiunerovskii anthology). no. 7, St. Petersburg: MAE RAS 2013, p. 32.

4 HE Yuming. “The Book and the Barbarian in Ming China and Beyond: The Luo chong lu, or ‘Record of Naked Creatures’”. In: *Asia Major. Third series*, vol. 24, no 1. Taipei: 2011, pp. 44–47. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41650005.pdf?seq=1> (last access 2020, April 7).

5 Ibid., p. 67.

geographical directory *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志 (Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms), first published in 1843 in response to China's defeat in the First Opium War. It is believed that the collection was compiled by the famous official and scientist WEI Yuan 魏源 on the instructions of the famous statesman of the first half of the 19th century LIN Zexu 林則徐, who personally conducted most of the work for the preparation of the initial version of the handbook. Most of the handbook is made up of descriptions of various countries of the world, from South-East Asia to Russia and the USA. Each article focuses on history, geography, military aspects, and trade, although there are also descriptions of local traditions and customs. The treatise was reprinted twice in 1847 and 1852 respectively. Each subsequent edition was significantly expanded, primarily due to the rapidly growing amount of new information on foreigners. However, the book received little popularity until the 1860s and a narrow readership in coastal areas of China. As AGØY points out, although this edition is sometimes called the greatest geopolitical work in imperial China, it had no impact on the Qing Empire's policy toward Western countries but served only as a source of information about them.<sup>6</sup>

As mentioned above, such treatises did not widely circulate among a wide range of Chinese readers, being popular mainly among representatives of Chinese officials who served in the areas of contact with the foreigners. However, the expansion of China's contacts with the West since the second half of the 19th century, as well as the emergence of "overseas wonders" in Chinese everyday life could not but impact the formation of a special image of foreigners in folk culture. When China faced the danger from the Western powers, it could not but reflect on the traditional worldview, causing various reactions from the intellectual elite of the Qing state. Lots of thinkers of that time expressed their opinions about the "Western barbarians", suggesting various ways of interacting with them. The expansion of contacts with the West influenced almost all spheres of Chinese life, including its traditional art.

Traditionally, among the most common visual "carriers" of information in China among the broad masses of the population were Chinese folk woodblock prints – *nianhua* 年畫 (New Year pictures). The custom to decorate the house on New Year's Eve with bright printed images with well-wishing symbols on them appeared in China as early as the 12th century. In the second half of the 19th century the art of *nianhua* became widespread in China and developed into an independent form of fine art. At the beginning of the 20th century with the development

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6 Erling T.H. AGØY: *Portrayal of Foreigners in Traditional Chinese History and Literature*, pp. 120–123. Available online: <https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/54557/EAST4591-Master-s-Thesis-in-East-Asian-Culture-and-History--Erling-Hagen-Ag-y.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (last access 2019, December 11).

of printing technology, these images became extremely popular with all kinds of population of the Qing Empire.

Today's experts all over the world are currently arguing about what kind of folk paintings is worth classifying as *nianhua*. Originally, they were xylographic<sup>7</sup> images used in cult practices connected with the celebration of the Chinese New Year. However, with the development of this type of art, folk woodblock paintings began increasingly to appear on subjects unrelated to the celebration of *Chunjie* 春節 (The Spring Festival). Modern Chinese scientists use a broader term to refer to such folk pictures – *mubanhua* 木版畫 (Woodblock Prints). However, in Russian Sinology and Art history, the name of *nianhua* has been firmly established. According to Saint Petersburg specialist in Chinese art Galina Sergeevna GUL'TIĀEVA, in spite of the fact that since the end of the 19th century “traditsionnaia zhanrovaia i khudozhestvennaia sistema nian'khua preterpevaet kardinal'nye izmeneniia” (the genre and artistic system of *nianhua* began to undergo radical changes), the folk painting “sokhraniat v sebe traditsionnye osnovy: dekorativnyi kharakter, uslovnii simvolikometaforicheskiĭ iazyk” (“preserved its traditional foundations: decorative character, as well as symbolic and metaphorical language”).<sup>8</sup>

The first collector of Chinese woodblock paintings in Russia was academic Vasilii Mikhaĭlovich ALEKSEEV (1881–1951) – a prominent Russian Sinologist. Starting from 1906, when he first visited China, V.M. ALEKSEEV was lucky to visit over 50 main centers of production of Chinese woodblock prints and started to collect them as part of his study of local folklore. The scientist collected a huge number of New Year pictures, about 3000 pieces in total. At the behest of academic ALEKSEEV, his extensive collection, which was enriched in 1912 and 1926 during his trips to southern China, was divided between major museums of Leningrad. The collections of New Year paintings in Saint Petersburg museums was once again enlarged in the 1960–1980's. Most of these images (about 2000 pieces) are now stored in the State Hermitage. Nowadays, the museums of St. Petersburg, such as the Hermitage, the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (the Kunstkamera), the State Museum of the History of Religion, and the Russian Geographical Society, are the owners of a unique collection of *nianhua* – more than 4500 pieces. Only collections in China can compare with this collection.

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7 Xylography or woodcut - a printing technique that involves carving text in relief upon a wooden block, which is then inked and applied to paper. Merriam-Webster: “Xylography”. In: *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/xylography> (last access 2020, April 14).

8 G.S. GUL'TIĀEVA: *Kitaĭskaia narodnaia kartina nian'khua XX veka: tipologiia zhanrov i evolutsiia* (Chinese Nianhua folk painting of the 20th century: genre typology and evolution), Sankt-Peterburg: SPbUHSS 2007, pp. 3–4.

A student of V.M. ALEKSEEV and longtime curator of the collection of Chinese folk paintings in the Hermitage, Mariia Leonidovna RUDOVA, identified five main groups of such woodblock prints based on their theme: 1) New Year paintings with religious subjects; 2) Pictures with well-wishing symbols; 3) Images of everyday life scenes; 4) Illustrations for literary works - myths, legends, novels, etc.; and 5) Theatrical pictures.<sup>9</sup> G.S. GUL'TIĀEVA in her Ph.D. dissertation on the typology and evolution of *nianhua* genres in the 20th century expanded this list by adding two more types of Chinese folk New Year folk paintings: 6) Political paintings, which reflected the sociopolitical events of the 20th century and 7) Calendar pictures, as well as promotional calendars<sup>10</sup>. As the famous British Sinologist of the 20th century, John LUST mentioned in his monograph: “rigid criteria are not easily imposed on the prints. Illustration had always tended to move outside narrow definitions of celebrations.”<sup>11</sup> He also for the first time drew attention to the possibility of classifying *nianhua* not only by their subject matter, but also by “target audience”.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the fact that the first images of foreigners and “overseas wonders” appeared on the Chinese folk woodblock prints in the 18th century, the largest number of images of “European realities” refers to the late 19th and early 20th century as a response to the expansion of the sphere of interaction between the Qing Empire and the world. Such woodblock prints, usually dated between the 1890s and the 1920s, can be divided into several main groups:

- 1) Images related to the activities of Christian missionaries in China. These are anti-Christian drawings depicting the missionaries in the most unattractive form and calling for struggle against them.
- 2) Traditional well-wishing woodblock prints with images of Western realities on them: houses, household items, costumes, etc. Such pictures became popular at the beginning of the 20th century with the increasing spread of “European innovations” in Chinese everyday life.
- 3) Images on historical and political issues, depicting, among other things, China’s relations with foreign states. According to experts, this genre first appeared at the turn of the 19–20th century.

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9 M.L. RUDOVA: *Kitaškaia narodnaia kartinka* (Chinese folk paintings), Sankt-Peterburg: Aurora 2003, pp. 12–16.

10 G.S. GUL'TIĀEVA: *Kitaškaia narodnaia kartina* (2007), p. 26.

11 John LUST: *Chinese popular prints*, Leiden: Brill 1996, p. 8.

12 For more details see: E.A. TERIŪKOVA, E.A. ZAVIDOVSKAIĀ, O.S. KHIZHNIĀK, M.V. KORMANOVSKAIĀ, V.N. MAZURINA: “Kitaškaia narodnaia kartina iz sobraniia GMIR: opyt sistematiatsii (Chinese folk painting from the SMHR collection: the experience of systematization)”. In: *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo muzeia istorii religii* (Proceedings of the State Museum of the History of Religion), no. 17, Sankt-Peterburg: SPbGUD 2017, p. 96.

## Pictures of Christian missionaries in China

According to academic V.M. ALEKSEEV, Christianity, like Buddhism, was “hostile to Confucianism”, however: “buddisty prosto ne obrashchali vnimaniia na prenebrezhenie konfutsiantsev, khristianstvo, chuvstvuia v konfutsianstve vraga, vse vremia srazhalos' s nim” (“the Buddhists simply took no notice of the disdain of Confucianists, while Christianity, seeing Confucianism as an enemy, fought against it all the time”).<sup>13</sup> He also noticed that:

Evropeitsy, prinesshie khristianstvo, ne mogli poniat' kitaiskuiu kul'tu-ru. Missionery izuchali Kitaï lish' s tsel'iu učit' ego. ... Sami khristian-skie missii veli mezhdu soboi voïnu. Kitaïtsy nedoumevali – vse raznye very: tian'chzhu tsziiao – katolichestvo, esu tsziiao – protestanstvo, tszidu tsziiao – pravoslavnaia tserkov'. ... [Missionery zachastuï] shli na shpionazh, politi-ku poblazhek, i, konechno, pastva sostoiala glavnyim obrazom iz kar'eristov i voobshche skvernykh elementov. ... Skandal'nye istorii, v kotorykh uchastvo-vali khuligany i grabiteli, prikrывavshiesia missionerstvom, ne raz vyzy-vali otkrytye vosstaniia protiv khristian.

The Europeans who brought Christianity could not understand Chinese culture. Missionaries studied China only to teach it. ... The Christian missions themselves fought among themselves The Chinese were puzzled – all different religions: *tian-zhu jiao* 天主教 – Catholicism, *yesu jiao* 耶稣教 – Protestantism, *jidu jiao* 基督教 – Orthodox Church. ... [Missionaries often] went on espionage, a policy of indulgence, and, of course, their parish consisted mainly of careerists and generally bad elements. ... Scandalous stories in which hooligans and robbers participated, hiding behind missionary work, have repeatedly caused open rebellions against the Christians.<sup>14</sup>

The contradictions between Christianity and traditional Chinese beliefs, along with the growing pressure from the Western Powers after China's defeat in the Opium Wars, resulted in numerous protests against Christians (both missionaries and converted Chinese). In particular, in the series of anti-Christian riots of 1891, when crowds rose up in nearly one dozen cities along the Yangzi River, stretching from Nanjing to Yichang, and hundreds of Chinese Christians and two Englishmen were murdered. As foreign missionaries and local officials believed, one of the causes that stirred up public violence in this case, was a series of woodblock prints

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13 V.M. ALEKSEEV: *Kitaïskaia narodnaia kartina. Dukhovnaia zhizn' starogo Kitaia v narodnykh izob-razheniakh* (Chinese folk picture. The spiritual life of old China in folk images), Moscow: Science 1966, p. 148.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 148–150.

that were included in an illustrated pamphlet by conservative Chinese scholar ZHOU Han 周汉 (1842–1911) titled *Jin zun shengyu bixie quan tu* 謹遵聖諭辟邪全圖 (In Accord with the Imperial Edict: Complete Illustrations of the Heretical Religion) and published around 1890. The pamphlet was reproduced by a member of the London Missionary Society, Welsh Christian missionary in China Griffith JOHN (1831–1912), who put the pictures in the reverse order (32-1), added translations and commentary, and published them under the name of *The Cause of the Riots in the Yangtse Valley: A “Complete Picture Gallery”* in Hankou in 1891. Some of the examples from JOHN’s pamphlet are now stored in the State Museum of the History of Religion in Saint Petersburg as part of ALEKSEEV original collection.

All these paintings depict admirers of Christianity in an extremely unpleasant form. For this purpose, in particular, a play on words is used. Thus, the character *tianzhu* 天主 (the Lord) is in tune with the character *tianzhu* 天豬 (the heavenly pig), so Jesus is usually depicted on such prints as a pig with the character *yesu* 耶穌 on its side. The character *jiao* 教 (the doctrine) is replaced by *jiao* 叫 (a cry, a squeal). Therefore, preachers are called *jiaosi* 叫司 (the one who shouts), and the Christian sermon is called no other way than “the squeal of a pig”. Believers, *jiaotu* 叫徒 (a follower of the “squeal”), are often depicted wearing Chinese and Western clothing as well as sitting in *jiaotang* 叫堂 (the hall of shouting) in pairs of the opposite sex to embrace each other, which indicates the complete lack of morals in the followers of Christian teaching. These paintings contain a large amount of green color, which is traditionally considered a symbol of depraved behavior in China. All the paintings in the series are supplied with anti-Christian inscriptions calling on the Chinese people to rebel against the followers of other people’s teachings. Figures 10-1 to 10-3 show some of the most striking examples of the wood-blocks of this series with Chinese characters written and read from right to left.

Figure 10-1: In this picture, one can see two bearded foreigners on the left, both wearing western clothes and green hats, kneeling; representing *jiaosi* 叫司 and *jiaotu* 叫徒. *Yesu* 耶穌 is written on the pig on the right. The inscription on the far right reads: *Zhe chusheng nai yanggui suo gui pimao wei tuo* 這畜牲乃洋鬼所販皮毛未脫 (This beast, whose pelt and bristle has not yet been removed, is embraced by foreign devils). On the far left it reads: *Tang renlei yi tianzhu wei zhu yanmian he cun* 倘人類以天豬為主顏面何存 (If humanity treats a hog as heavenly god, then how do they not lose face?)





Figure 10-1: *Gui bai zhu jing tu* 鬼拜猪精圖  
(The devils worshipping the hog)<sup>15</sup>

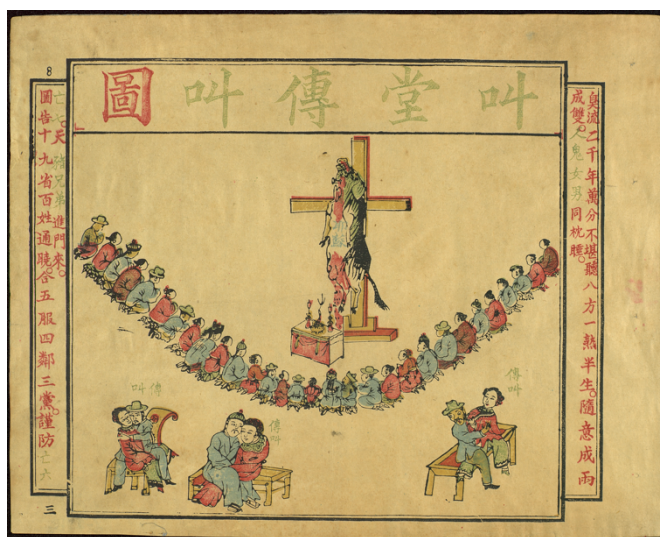


Figure 10-2: *Jiao tang chuan jiao tu* 叫堂傳叫圖  
(Propagating religion in the chapels)<sup>16</sup>

15 State Museum of the History of Religion collection, (SMHR No X-2910/1-VII).

16 Ibid., (SMHR No X-2910/3-VII).

Figure 10-2: In the middle of the picture, a bloody pig with the characters *yesu* 耶蘇 on its chest is crucified on a wooden cross. In front of the cross there is a table with two candles and a censer. Half circling around the table is a group of Chinese on their knees in robes of various colors. In the foreground sit three hugging couples on three benches, which symbolizes the lack of morality among the followers of Christianity.



Figure 10-3: *Shi dao zhi gui tu* 釋道治鬼圖  
(The priests of Buddha and Dao expelling the devils)<sup>17</sup>

Figure 10-3: The painting depicts a group of eight Chinese people in various poses and multi-colored robes. They are holding sticks in their hands and using them to beat three pigs on the ground. On the surface of each pig one can see the Chinese characters from left to right: *jiaotu* 叫徒, *yesu* 耶蘇, *jiaosi* 叫司. Near the top of the picture, a Taoist saint is depicted on a cloud on the right holding a sword in his right hand and a flag in his left. The floating figure also on a cloud next to him is the Buddha holding a staff in his right hand and a rosary in his left. The picture very well depicts the idea popular in China during the second half of the 19th century that only traditional culture can help fight against foreign invaders.

<sup>17</sup> State Museum of the History of Religion collection, (SMHR No X-2910/12-VII).

## Traditional Well-wishing Woodblock Prints with Images of Western Realities

As V.M. ALEKSEEV noted:

Kogda v kitaĭskom bytu poiĭavilis' evropeĭskie novshestva, narodnaĭa kar-tina seĭchas zhe uchla ěto, i v 1906 g. na narodnykh kartinakh uzhe možno bylo vstretit' evropeĭskie doma, nariady, tipy liudeĭ i takie novinki, kak grammofon, stennye chasy, nastol'nye lampy, neveroiatnye golovnye ubo-ry, izobrazhaĭushchie evropeĭskie solomennye shliapy, i t.p. ... Odnako, evro-peĭskie novshestva, vryvaĭas' v tkan' kitaĭskoĭ narodnoĭ kartiny, ne narushali ee, ne meniĭali narodnyĭ stil' i formulu, priniatiuĭ stoletĭiami.

When European innovations appeared in Chinese everyday life, the folk picture immediately took this into account, and in 1906 European houses, outfits, types of people, and such novelties as a gramophone, wall clocks, table lamps, incredible hats, depicting European straw hats, etc. were often seen on *nianhua*... However, European innovations, breaking into the fabric of the Chinese picture, did not violate it, did not change the folk style and formula adopted by the centuries.<sup>18</sup>

Participants of a recent research project that aims to systematize the collection of Chinese folk block-prints from the collection of academic ALEKSEEV, stored in the archives of the State Museum of the History of Religion in Saint Petersburg, also mention:

Gibkiĭ kharakter iskusstva nĭan'khua, kotoroe vpityvalo v sebiĭa i postoianno obogashchalos' novymi siuzhetami i obrazami, shlo v nogu s meniĭaiushchimsiĭa obshchestvom i tekhnicheskim progressom i v silu svoeĭ neobyknovennoĭ populiarnosti i rasprostranennosti neslo informatsiĭu ob ětikh sotsial'nykh i tekhnologicheskikh novshestvakh v samye shirokie sloi sel'skogo naseleniĭa.

The flexible nature of *nianhua* art, which was constantly enriched by new subjects and images, kept pace with the changing society and technical progress and, because of its unusual popularity and prevalence, carried information about these social and technological innovations to the widest sections of the rural population.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 33–35.

<sup>19</sup> E.A. TERIŬKOVA et al.: *Kitaĭskaĭa narodnaĭa kartina* (2017), p. 108.

Among such images we can highlight a series of paintings made in the workshops of *Yangliuqing* (楊柳青) – a village in the suburbs of Tianjin, which is still one of the most famous centers of traditional woodblock prints in China. Tianjin was also one of the most westernized cities of late Qing China, which is why such images often depict the achievements of Western technology such as: railways, railway bridges, western-style buildings and other foreign engineering structures, as well as signs of Western lifestyle penetration into China (Figures 10-4 to 10-7).

Figure 10-4: As mentioned, among the most frequent subjects in the images of this group were modern engineering structures. In this picture, you can see one of said structures: a drawbridge over the Great Canal in Tianjin. This city was opened for foreign trade after 1860 and began to develop rapidly as one of the centers where foreign states representatives could stay. Therefore, in addition to the new “modern” bridge, we can see Chinese ladies and men in Western outfits, European style wagons, new European style lanterns and other innovations in the picture.

Figure 10-5: This picture portrays the way the western fashion of that time influenced everyday life in late Qing China. It shows modern Tianjin residents: two ladies riding bicycles (a symbol of western civilization) and three gentlemen with European style buildings behind them in the background. This painting was created after 1900, when the old city wall was demolished in Tianjin.

Figure 10-6: According to a famous Russian sinologist B.L. RIFTIN, this picture was first created in Yangzhou after 1894 and later reprinted in Shanghai.<sup>20</sup> The picture is intended to show how different the morals of foreigners are from those of the Chinese, which is written at the top of the image. However, neither the image nor the inscription should be considered to contain any negative connotations. The author is merely puzzled: “How unusual are the manners of foreigners!” (*Yang fengsu geng xiqi* 洋風俗更希奇).

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20 B.L. RIFTIN and ĪŪiſhan' LiŪ (ed.): *Redkie kitaſskie narodnye kartiny iz sovetkikh sobraniĭ* (Rare Chinese folk paintings from Soviet collections), Leningrad: Aurora 1991, p. 198.





Figure 10-4: *Tianjin Hebei xin Fuqiao* 天津河北新浮橋 (New drawbridge in Tianjin)<sup>21</sup>



Figure 10-5: *Tianjin malu* 天津馬路 (Tianjin Road)<sup>22</sup>

21 Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology (Kunstkamera) collection, (MAE No 1080-111/49).

22 Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology (Kunstkamera) collection, (MAE No 1080-97/22).



Figure 10-7: One can see a courtyard of a western style school. The female students are all wearing flat western hats while the teacher is dressed in a traditional Chinese dress. Some of the students are reading; others are practicing martial arts. A man wearing a western style suit is peeping from the street. As another specialist in *nianhua* from Saint Petersburg, Ekaterina ZAVIDOVSKAIA, and her colleagues on the project on ALEKSEEV's collection of State Museum of the History of Religion noted, women's themes were very popular for Shanghai *nianhua*. These pictures tell us about new forms of women's leisure that became typical of China in 1900–1920, reflecting a change in women's status in Chinese society.<sup>25</sup>

## Images on Historical and Political Issues

As a prominent Chinese expert on the history of Chinese folk paintings, WANG Shucun wrote: “v otlichie ot vysokoï zhivopisi, tselikom zamknuvsheisïa v sfere odnikh i tekhn zhe traditsionnykh tem, kitaïskaïa narodnaïa kartina ètogo vremeni shiroko otrazhala real'niu deïstvitel'nost'” (“in contrast to high painting, seriously limited in its scope to the same traditional themes, the Chinese folk picture of this time widely reflected the reality”).<sup>26</sup> One of the most popular new themes for the Chinese folk painting at the turn of the 20th century was fighting with foreign invaders. First of all, there were paintings depicting the Japanese aggression against China, as well as the topics related to the participation of Western powers in suppressing the Boxer movement in China.

The peculiarity of such paintings, which was noticed by V.M. ALEKSEEV, was that:

Istoricheskie legendy i èpopei izobrazhalis' vseгда v vide teatral'nogo predstavleniia: kitaïtsy ne mogut sebe inache predstavit' istoricheskoe deïstvie, kak tol'ko v vide deïstviia teatral'nogo, i èto poniatno, tak kak imenno teatr znakomit negramotnykh s istoriei i literaturoï.

The historical legends and sagas were always depicted in the form of a theatrical performance: the Chinese can only imagine a historical action if it is shaped as a

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25 For more details see: E.A. TERÛKOVA et al.: *Kitaïskaïa narodnaïa kartina* (2017), pp. 106–108.

26 SHÛsun' VAN: “K istorii kitaïskoï narodnoï kartiny”. In: B.L. RIFTIN and Ûïshan' LIÛ (ed.): *Redkie kitaïskie narodnye kartiny* (1991), p. 28.

theatrical action, and this is understandable, since it is the theater that introduces illiterate people to history and literature.<sup>27</sup>

The “historical” stories depicted in such paintings often contradicted reality. This could be due to authors’ low awareness of historical processes, as well as due to a deliberate desire to “embellish” certain events. Unfortunately, Saint Petersburg collections do not include such paintings in a wide range, but one of the brightest examples called *Paoda Riben guo* 炮打日本國 (MAE No 3676-249) exaggerates the achievements of the Chinese military in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894–95 (Figure 10-8).



Figure 10-8: *Paoda Riben guo* 炮打日本國 (Shelling Japan)<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, it is plausible to say that one can hardly argue with T.I. VINOGRADOVA’s opinion that talking about *nianhua* we should recognize that these paintings were created “iskliuchitel’no dliā obsluzhivaniā nuzhd osnovnoī natsii, naseliāiushcheī imperiū, t.e. khan’tsev, kitaītsev” (“solely to serve the needs of the main nation inhabiting the Empire, i.e. *Han* 漢 - the Chinese”). However, one should always keep in mind that among the vast mass of representatives of the Chinese nation, there could be groups of “consumers” of folk paintings with sometimes completely opposite demands – from fighters against Christianity to fans of any kind of new Western trends. One way or another, it is obvious that the

27 V.M. ALEKSEEV: *Kitaškaia narodnaia kartina* (1966), p. 35.

28 Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology (Kunstkamera) collection, (MAE No 3676-249).



unprecedented expansion of China's contacts with the outside world, which began in the second half of the 19th century, impacted almost all spheres of life of Chinese society and the state, which is very clearly reflected in the most "popular" (i.e. widespread among the general public) of all types of visual art in China – the art of *nianhua*.

