



Tradition and innovation in the traditional arts of Shandong Province, China¹

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ABSTRACT

The paper outlines the social forces influencing continuity or innovation in the traditional arts of Shandong Province, China. These are addressed under five headings:

1. The relative flexibility of material media
2. The gender based transmission of skills
 - (a) Male: Chayanov and craft production for the market during the slack agricultural season: Woodblock printing, toy-making, funeral models, ancestral and household shrine painting. Innovations take the form of new subjects, introduced to attract new buyers
 - (b) Female: cotton weaving, embroidery, paper cutting. Most of the villages we've worked in still practice village exogamy (despite the law of 1950 banning compulsory exogamy), so that women take skills with them when they marry, whereas men's skills remain in their village of birth.
3. Combined with the purpose of production:
 - (a) Male arts primarily produced for market, with 100s of years of market tradition
 - (b) Female arts primarily for domestic consumption (although surplus cotton cloth has long been traded to increase family income), among which the daughter's trousseau is an important component.
4. Disruption caused by the mid-20th century 'social movements' caused an enforced break in almost all crafts.
5. The acceptability of the arts to the intended audience (new but traditional themes in toys and woodblocks), and the movement toward fine art.

Introduction

Redfield characterised peasant communities as 'part societies'. He wrote (1960: 27): 'a peasant society is two connecting halves. We may be able to see a sort of link or hinge between the local life of a peasant society and the state or feudal system of which it is a part.' The culture of a peasant community, moreover, 'is an aspect or dimension of the civilisation of which it is a part' (Redfield 1960: 40). Village culture is one expression of the history of the civilisation to which it belongs; the 'little tradition' of the village and the 'great tradition' of the cities each influence the other (Redfield cited the influence of folk rituals on Confucius's teaching as an example).

The traditional arts of Shandong Province rely on a centuries old artistic tradition, shared throughout Han culture, to express concepts, hopes and aspirations, using well-known symbols: the peach (longevity) and peony (wealth and distinction), the many seeds of lotus and pomegranate (many children), bamboo (friendship in hard times) and homophones (fish, lotus, vase) for valued states such as affluence and peace.

Many of the traditional arts practiced in Shandong Province have an ancient history. Archaeological evidence for embroidery is found in the Shang and Eastern Chou dynasties, from the 6th century B.C. (Young 1980: 9). The earliest archaeological finds of clay toys date from the Tang (AD 618-907) and Song (AD 960-1279) dynasties (Prof. Zhang Daoyi, pers comm.). Yangjiabu village has a 500-year old history of woodblock printing. Cotton weaving was introduced to north China, including Shandong Province, in the early 17th century (Bray 1997: 219).

Flexibility of materials (toys; weaving vs. woodblock)

The material medium in which ideas and beliefs are materialised influences the way in which they are expressed. This can clearly be seen if we compare realisations of the same characters in the different traditions of toy making in rural Shandong [illustration 1].

A comparison of Mu Guiying, a character in *The Yang Generals* is portrayed in rural opera costume, modelled in sun-dried clay by Mr. Liu of Xiao Guo Dong Village, and in raw flour paste by Mr. Wan Xingi of Miao Lou Village. Mr. Wan has represented her weapons, costume, feathered headdress and military banners in exquisite detail, whereas the constraints of working in baked clay cast in a mould limit Mr. Liu to merely hinting at these details. On the other hand, Mr. Liu's clay model is durable and could last for many years, whereas Mr. Wan's models, sold to children at village festivals, would probably be broken by the end of the day. Mr. Lang Xiucui's model of the Pig from *Journey to the West* in baked flour paste is situated somewhere between the two extremes, more durable than raw paste figures, yet more detailed than a clay model.

The influence of the medium is particularly apparent if we compare the versatility of woodblock printing with the relative inflexibility of weaving dictated by the structure of warp and weft threads. In an introductory publication, Shandong University of Art and Design refers to it as 'Shandong grid cloth' But SUAD also comments that, through the contrast, repetition, spacing and continuity of colour of the thread, there are nearly 2,000

different patterns of Shandong hand weaving figured cloth. The majority of these have meaning, and are given figurative interpretations.

The influence of material medium on design (1) - toys

The example of traditional toys – constraints and opportunities:

(i)



(ii)



(iii)



(i) Mu Guiying (*widow of a Song general*) modelled in sun-dried clay;
 (ii) Mu Guiying and Pig (*Journey to the West*) in raw flour paste;
 (iii) Pig modelled in baked flour paste
 - Different media permit more or less detail; and are more or less durable

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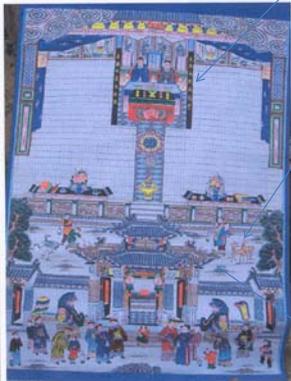
Illustration 1

Gender-based transmission of skills

The unit of production for traditional arts is the courtyard, which combines living quarters, a kitchen and an enclosed area for growing crops such as vegetables and fruit trees [illustration 2]

(a) The founding couple at the family shrine

(b) The Courtyard (Crane = longevity, Deer = longevity, Pine tree = friendship in hard times)



(c) The entrance to the courtyard: descendants old and young have returned to worship at the shrine (their clothing indicates adults have succeeded as scholars or bureaucrats)



Mr. Zhang Yuzhou's ancestral shrine, with altar table



Typical village courtyards (goats, fruit trees, farming equipment)



Typical, but relatively elaborate, village courtyard gate

The courtyard as the unit of production and transmission: the ideal and the real (Ancestral shrine painting © Zhang Wei Zheng, 2005)

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Illustration 2

Men's arts

Traditionally, and among all but the most commercially successful families, rural arts in Shandong Province are produced during the agricultural slack season, between the autumn harvest and the spring ploughing. Chayanov's field research in early 20th century Russia showed that because demands on the peasant household's labour fluctuate through the year, reaching a maximum during planting and harvesting of crops, the household will find other uses for its labour during the agricultural slack season. The main alternatives Chayanov identified were cultivating cash crops, craft production and seasonal labour migration (Chayanov 1966 [1925]).

Different villages are characterised by different arts. Niejia village specialises in baked clay toys, in particular a model tiger that squeaks when it is pressed (*Nie-jia* = Nie clan). Others specialise in woodblock printing, ancestral shrine painting, funeral models, basket weaving etc. There are two underlying determinants. The first is economic. Thanks to the centuries-old regional and national trade networks through which the arts are traded, it has become economically advantageous for each village to specialise, and hence develop a reputation in the skilled manufacture of a particular art form. Good trade networks are essential to allow this remarkable degree of specialisation: either craftsmen themselves, or merchants who buy their work, must be able to travel widely to capture a large enough market. This has been the case in China at least since the Song (Sung) Dynasty (AD 960-1126) (Bray 1997: 28), and probably earlier (Rawson 1980: 137). Today, craftsmen sell their products in local markets, or to travelling merchants. In the past, some travelled widely through China, especially in the closing years of the Imperial Regime.

The second determinant is social. The arts listed above are transmitted in the male line. Since many of the province's villages still demand inter-village marriage and residence in the husband's village, male craft skills remain in, and therefore become emblematic of, their village of origin.

Yangjiabu village, for example, is famous for its tradition of woodblock printing (*Yang-jia* = Yang clan). According to Mr. Yang Luoshu, the oldest living printer, the first immigrants settled here during the Ming Dynasty. As Mr. Yang explained, they knew how to paint, but didn't carve woodblocks. They sold their paintings, but found the technique too slow, so they invented woodblock printing to speed up the process. Mr. Yang belongs to the 19th generation of woodblock printers in the village. It is clear, then, that the techniques have long been passed down through the male line within the Yang clan. When we asked a father and son, co-owners of another family workshop, they told us Mr. Yang senior learnt from his father, and taught his son. The same, they said, is true in every courtyard in Yangjiabu village. The *technique* is only learned from one's parents. The son's wife learned from her husband and father in law. She comes from a village 0.5 km away.

Owners of other workshops, however, showed us that there may be exceptions. In one family there were no sons, and the daughter learnt woodblock printing from her parents. She told us that her husband was born in another village 2.5 km away where they don't practice woodblock printing and so he did not learn the technique, but this woman's son is now learning from her. It may be significant that neither she nor her husband carve

woodblock. Some of the blocks they use have been passed down from her parents but others that they use are newly made, which they asked other people to carve for them.

In a third case, the father had died young, before he could teach his son. Happily, the father had taught his wife, and the son learnt from her. In this household, the son has learned how to carve woodblocks, and so it is possible that his mother learnt the more complex, technically skilled process of woodblock carving from her husband. The mother is also teaching the son's wife, who was born in a village 3 km. away. The son's wife, Mrs. Wang Aihua, told us that some prints are produced in her village, because girls from Yangjiabu have married into that village and taken woodblocks with them, although they bring the prints back to Yangjiabu to sell. Mrs. Wang Aihua added that a girl could only take a block with her if there were no sons in her family. If there was a son, the daughter would be forbidden to take any blocks away when she married. Except, she added, if the daughter was 'not living a very good life', the father might lend her blocks to use, but she would have to return them in due course. Mr. Yang Luoshu, who has both sons and daughters working with him in Yangjiabu, similarly told us that girls who marry into another village can take blocks with them, to make prints in their husband's village, but send the work back to Yangjiabu to be sold. We asked, 'Why would you allow your daughter to take blocks with her when she married?' Mr. Yang replied, 'Because she's my daughter, and I can't refuse'. He further explained that the workshop might have several versions of the same theme, so could spare some blocks to be taken away, *and* because this helps the craft to be passed on.

In view of this information, we made some preliminary investigation of the distinctiveness of individual workshops' products, and whether they hold any rights over them. We were told that there is a rule in the village that you don't sell blocks between households, although you may lend them to a brother. Another workshop told us it was permissible to buy blocks from households that have no children of their own.

While our brief survey was certainly not exhaustive it is clear that different family workshops have created different variants on the classic theme of the Door Gods (illustration 3).

This would be readily explicable if only members of the male line in each family carved the woodblocks they use, particularly since Mrs. Wang Aihua (wife of Yang Sui-pe) told us that new blocks can be carved using prints from a worn-out set of blocks as the template. However, Yang Chengxin told us that wealthier workshops sometimes commission professional artists to produce new designs, telling the artist what design they want. Before universities existed, all the professional painters were from Yangjiabu; some families specialised in this branch of the tradition. Now, university students training in graphic arts may also be asked to create new designs.

We gained the impression that there was little concern to protect individual realisations of traditional themes such as the Door Gods that are pasted on the courtyard gates at New Year to protect the family from evil: 'People will not argue about it, the traditional belongs to everyone.' On the other hand, workshops are expanding their repertoire in response to the mass production of traditional themes, looking particularly to books on Peking Opera for new images. Such topics are 'modern' in the sense that they are not

traditionally part of the woodblock printing tradition, but they are still based on traditional culture. If a customer came into a family shop asking for a subject they did not produce, the workshop would become aware that a new theme was gaining popularity and they might begin production, but they would be expected to realise the theme in their own distinctive way.



Illustration 3

Women's arts

The social organisation of women's crafts, in particular the cotton weaving still practiced by older women in the west of Shandong Province, generates a different pattern in the distribution of intangible culture. Despite the 1950 law abolishing obligatory village exogamy, most villages we visited in Shandong Province still insist on village exogamy, with girls moving to a neighbouring village some 2-10 kilometres away on marriage. Women first learn designs from their mothers. After marriage, they see and may adopt designs brought to their husband's village by women who married in from other communities. Skilled women also invent new variant designs, which they can teach to friends and neighbours, and (in the past) to daughters. No design will be unique to a single village.

Purpose of production

Male crafts

Chayanov pointed out that peasant households experience an annual cycle of peak activity at planting and harvesting, interspersed with slack times, particularly between the autumn harvest and spring planting. Households must command sufficient labour to meet the peak season demands, and therefore tend to have surplus labour during the slack

season, which they can deploy through craft production or labour migration. This is true of all but the commercially most successful courtyards we have interviewed. Chayanov predicted that rural households with the least land would make most use of household labour in craft production during the slack season. There is a slight trend in this direction among the courtyards where we collected data on both land-holding and annual income, although it is not statistically significant [figure below]. When we started fieldwork for the current project in 2005, the rural economy was once more in decline. In 1994 there had been a national reform of state services in which the obligation to provide welfare, health and education was shifted from central to provincial governments, who in turn passed the burden to counties and thence townships, which could not afford to sustain the previous level of services (Gittings 2005: 272). During the 1990s many rural dwellers went deeply into debt to pay medical expenses. In 2002, however, the New National leadership team under Hu Jintao admitted there was a fresh rural crisis and since 2006 the Chinese Government has introduced a number of policies to improve rural living conditions, but male crafts remain an important source of income for the courtyard.

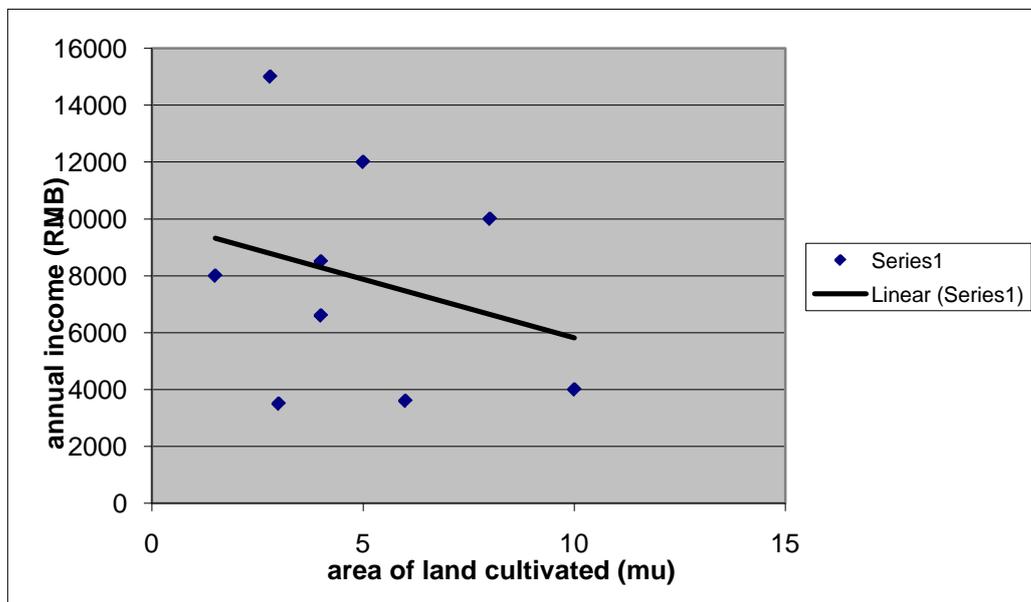


Figure 1

The relationship between the area of land cultivated by individual courtyards and their annual income from craft production (1 mu = 0.16 ha).

Weaving

The main goal of the weavers we interviewed, when they had been young, was to accumulate woven cotton for their trousseau. The imagery of many of the designs we were shown express the wish for future prosperity, depicting the wealth of food served at the wedding feast, the scales used to weigh harvest, or desirable consumer goods such as 'watch' and 'electric fan' [illustration 4].

Girls' traditional cotton weaving for dowry



*The Wedding Feast + Starry Night
(wishing for a sumptuous wedding
feast)*

The nine sub-squares with red and black crosses on white and yellow backgrounds are traditional food served at the wedding, 'Seven plants and eight bowls'.

The white dots on blue background = starry night: 'The stars shone their eyes'.



*'You would go mad/die trying to
weave it (it's so difficult)'*

It would make your (newly-married) husband very happy to see this design, because it shows what a clever, smart, skilful woman his wife is.

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Illustration 4

Others are designed to demonstrate the weaver's skill, particularly in producing designs that cut diagonally across the grid of warp and weft, given names such as 'It would drive you mad to weave this', or 'You won't find it in Beijing (it's too difficult)'. However, women in Shandong province have always traded surplus cotton production (Bray 1997: 219), and production for local entrepreneurs by means of outworking has recently been re-introduced in the province.

'Social movements'

During the early years of New China traditional arts were hit by two policies. As part of the destruction of the power of the clans that governed villages under the Imperial regime, village temples were closed and the burning of model people and animals during funerals was forbidden. These traditional arts therefore ceased production from the early 1950s. Secondly, in 1951 the government took control of long-distance trade and all trade in commodities. The private marketing of sideline products was forbidden. Profitable cash crops were replaced in a drive to increase staples: the wheat and sweet corn that still constitute the principal crops in Shandong (Diamond 1985). One of the household shrine painters we interviewed recalled with amusement the phrase quoted by Friedman et al (1991: 127-8), that those who, like him, continued making and selling their crafts in secret were denounced as the 'Capitalist Tail' of society that had to be cut off. For almost everyone, however, the abolition of free market exchange was catastrophic. One of the traditional toy makers we interviewed told us that, when he began to learn toy-making at the age of 15 in 1950, there was insufficient land for households to feed themselves, and craft income was essential. The land shortage was probably more acute in the days before the intensive use of chemical fertilisers was introduced under collectivization (see Diamond 1985: 252). Every family in his village used to make toys. Some were bought by wholesalers who came to the village, others were taken to market by the villagers. As a teenager the speaker travelled 1,400 km. by train to sell the toys in other places. But toy making had to stop, due to the 'social movements', creating great hardship. A carver of

decorated gourds similarly told us that before the 1950s nearly half the courtyards in his village carved gourds, but the craft was stopped by the 'social movements' of the 1950s, and only started again in the 1980s.

Peasant painting and woodblock printing in rural communes were encouraged during the periods of the Great Leap Forward (1958-60) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Early in this phase, much propaganda art was produced by peasants themselves, and the strong outlines and bright colours of peasant art derived from New Year prints were adopted by teachers recruited from art institutes (Thorp and Vinograd 2001: 377). Two types of collective were set up in the 1950s: agricultural and craft. Mr. Yang Luoshu, the oldest living woodblock printer in Yangjiabu showed us a new Kitchen God print he had produced in Mao's honour, which shows the kitchen god and his wife as ordinary peasants sitting at the dining table, with their children playing on the floor. However, he added that the print had not been very successful as people couldn't see the point of praying to an ordinary peasant. Another possible exception was the making of raw paste toys. Characters from Peking Opera formed one of the main sources of traditional inspiration. During the early years of 'New China' the artist we spoke to was, like many refugees from hunger (Zhao 2004), living in the north-east region of China and so knows little of what happened in his home village but he is fairly certain that during the Cultural Revolution makers of toy figures were allowed to continue their craft providing they changed the subjects to ones judged politically correct (presumably representing characters from operas such as *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*).

The printing of traditional themes came to an end in 1966, when the Cultural Revolution called on young people to "smash the four olds... old thinking, old customs, old habits and old culture" (Mitter 2004: 211). Household ancestral shrines were abolished, and so the production of shrine paintings ceased. Traditional woodblock printing ceased. The Rui Buddhist printing house in Nanjing lost 30,000 woodblocks, equivalent to 1,250 years' work by a single carver. The Tao-hua-wu woodblock printing co-operative in the city of Suzhou stopped work for ten years, from 1966 to 1976 after *all* its older blocks were destroyed. In Yangjiabu village, the most famous centre for woodblock printing in Shandong, we were told how family courtyards managed to hide only a few treasured ancestral wood blocks. Some buried them; others hid them under the bed (the traditional place for hiding money). Although everyone was ordered to give woodblocks to the government to burn, people tried to hand over only the less good ones. Conditions were worse in Da Zhao village, another centre for woodblock printing elsewhere in Shandong. Some woodblocks were destroyed, but villagers were driven to use others as fuel in their kitchens, as they had no means to earn money. Happily some blocks were bought by researchers, to protect them.

Domestic crafts seem to have escaped suppression during the Cultural Revolution. According to a 77 year old embroiderer we interviewed, domestic crafts were not attacked because they were (wrongly) viewed as having no social significance. On the other hand, a member of a basket-weaving village told us that, while basket-making was not forbidden, his parents had no time for their craft due to the relentless pressure to work for the collective farm.

Disruption in production created a problem for transmission: Older artists had learnt their craft at the start of New China. One rural woodblock printer we interviewed, for example, was apprenticed during the 1950s in the craft co-operative run by the local town. Mr. Li the gourd carver began to learn his craft at the age of 6, in 1962, during the period of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms when local markets re-opened and household craft production was permitted (Friedman et al. 1991: 252-9), but the craft was not revived until the 1980s. In general, there was a hiatus of between ten to thirty years during which no craft skills could be taught and younger artists only learned in the 1980s.

Why have traditional arts been revived?

Traditional arts in Han China persist because there are, on one hand, willing buyers. Traditions were revived because of demand from customers. Production of cricket pens in the Yuan family's Gold Brick workshop, Suzhou City, was abruptly halted during the Cultural Revolution, when cricket singing contests were deemed to belong to the 'four olds'. Cricket pens were destroyed and the workshop ceased production, the family resorting to full-time agricultural production. In 1975, however, some rich people drove from Shanghai – a difficult journey in those days – and sought out the Yuan family, asking them to restart production. Mr. Yuan's grandmother responded to the request, and the workshop returned to production.

Mr. Li Yuchen began to learn to carve gourds at the age of 6, in 1962. When he revived the craft in the 1980s, it was in response to personal requests and he made little money. In the 1990s, he began to travel, selling his gourds in Beijing and Tien Jin, a city near Beijing. Now he has an established reputation he no longer needs to travel and during the past three years his customers have come to him. They include tourists and private individuals who buy gourds as presents for friends, parents or teachers.

The destruction of the material heritage also posed a problem for the transmission of complex designs. Although the Tao-hua-wu workshop (Nanjing) lost all of its woodblocks during the Cultural Revolution, in 1951 the local Government's department of culture had fortunately commissioned a series of 200 prints of each of their older designs. These were bought by collectors, some of whom managed to hide their copies and brought them out in 1976. So far, 200 reproduction blocks have been carved. We were told in Yangjiabu village that after the Cultural Revolution people realised that block printing was an old custom and wanted to restore it. So they went to places where prints had been saved (e.g. museums) and brought them back to copy. In another village, an artist showed us an ancestral shrine painting made by his grandfather which had been successfully hidden (although with the genealogy cut out), which he has used as a template for his own work.

Opportunities and threats from the new market economy

While the revival of the market economy has allowed many traditional arts to blossom, mass production has caused considerable difficulties for some. Mr. Xiang You Wen, the cotton dyer of Xiao Wu Zhai village was abruptly put out of business by factory made products in 1987; up till that year he had dyed several thousand metres per year. During

the 1970s and '80s nearly all women in Chang-Lou village knew how to weave, and most women wove their own clothes. All women aged over 40 still possess the skills, having learnt at around 20 years old, but girls are no longer learning from their mothers. Weaving ceased in about 1990.

Some other crafts survive as curios, bought for example by government officials to give as presents to visitors. According to Prof. Zhang Daoyi (interview with RL and XB) the earliest 'toys' were models of children, for use in Buddhist temples. If a woman could not conceive, she would visit a temple, donate some money and, while no-one was looking, "steal" one of the clay figures. If she later successfully bore a child she would give further gifts to the temple. Later animals were modelled as well. The first animal was a clay bird that whistled. The first markets grew up around Buddhist temples, to which people would take their products on the occasion of the annual festival celebrating the Buddha's birthday. A woman who wanted a child would buy a basketful of whistling birds and take them home. When she got back to her village a crowd of children would follow her singling, 'if you give me a whistle you will be blessed with a child', and so she would hand them out. Today, mass-produced models of children can be bought in temples to Guanyin, the Buddhist patroness of child-birth.

Hand-made toys have diversified their subject-matter, to include characters from famous novels, generally as mediated by the locally-popular Peking Opera. Such toys are still bought by businessmen who come to the village from within Shandong Province and beyond. But they are also bought by government officials to use as gifts when travelling abroad and by a tourist agency in Jinan for sale to visitors. Two of the toy makers we interviewed have received small grants under the 2006 intangible cultural heritage programme, to employ apprentices.

All the numerous New Year prints that we saw posted on courtyard doors in towns and villages were mass-produced. The print-makers of Yangjiabu village still sell prints locally to villagers, but also cater for an art market. New subjects have been introduced, but drawn from traditional sources; the locally popular Peking Opera again provides many new subjects, just as opera is used as a source of subjects for new toys (and funeral models, burnt to accompany the deceased to heaven). This development is clearly successful; a family we interviewed in 2005 were one of a small number who had been able to graduate to year-round production and sale. Approximately one third of their sales are to tourists, including experts and academic researchers, who come directly to the workshop. At that time, they were hiring other villagers to help meet demand in the peak period approaching Chinese New Year. When we interviewed them again in 2009, they had five full-time employees.

Mrs. Yang Xinmei sold both mass produced and hand-printed posters. She explained that explained mass-printed posters are bought by poor villagers, because they are 1/10th of the cost of hand-printed posters (i.e. 0.1 RMB). *Visitors* (i.e. tourists) prefer hand-printed posters because they are more valuable; they want to keep them, or buy them for friends. The Tao-hua-wu print workshop in Suzhou now sells its work exclusively in a fine art gallery in the city. Mr. Lu Zhenli, a free-hand New Year painter of Gaomi City, produces paintings in two styles, a cheaper, colourful style for general collectors, and a more austere style in black ink that will be hung in the houses of scholars.

Mrs Qi Xiuhua of Gao Mi City is a nationally-famous paper-cutter. One of her cuts was reproduced on a stamp, an Ox celebrating the Year of the Ox in 1997. A second of her designs was also used on a postcard. According to her promotional leaflet, 'Her work surpasses the flat form of pure folk art and adds the sense of stereo'.

Cotton weaving has now been revived under exploitative conditions, by Juan City's archaeological museum curator, who acts as a middleman, selling the hand-woven linen for a profit to fund the museum's activities. Most production is conducted through the method of outworking; weavers work in their own homes, but pay the museum to supply them with linen thread and sell the completed work to the museum. We saw woven sheets, for which the weaver receives 20 RMB, for sale in a shop in Juan city for 280 RMB. Income is not high enough to attract young women, also traditional designs not always encouraged. But, interestingly, traditional children's shoes still hand-made, mainly by grandmothers, and embroidered with traditional motifs that are homophones or symbols of affluence, long life etc.

Conclusion

Chinese traditional arts embody an ancient Chinese culture standing against the invasion of Coca-Cola and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Artists from the Nanjing Yunjin Silk Brocade Institute incorporate traditional motifs into their work, such as the Dragon and Phoenix, traditional symbols of the Emperor and Empress, and the Taoist symbols of the four cardinal directions (dragon, bird, tiger, and intertwined snake and turtle). Moreover, with the return and headlong progress of the market economy in China, the traditional aspirations of good fortune, wealth and success in entering the bureaucracy become relevant once more to everyday life, and such aspirations are represented abundantly in the symbolism of the revived folk arts of Shandong Province.

Notes

¹ Bob Layton's note on his co-authors/collaborators:

Prof. Xu Biao: Professor of Fine Art, Nanjing Normal University. She invited me to participate in the research project, whose aim is to improve the income of rural artists and craftspeople in Shandong Province by establishing producer co-operatives and a Fair Trade network. She participated in the first, 2005, field trip to villages in Shandong Province. She and I collected comparative information on urban traditional arts in Nanjing, Suzhou and Yangzhou cities in 2007.

Prof. Zhao Yi: Director of the Folk Art Institute, Shandong University of Art and Design, who is co-ordinating the research project.

Dr. Tang Jia-Lu: Staff member in the Folk Art Institute. He led the 2005 field trip.

Ms. Tian Yuan: former student and current staff member at the Institute of Folk Art; made field arrangements for the 2005 field trip, led the 2008 and 2009 field trips, assisted by current students.

All have been helpful in teaching me about traditional and contemporary Chinese culture.

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