

The British
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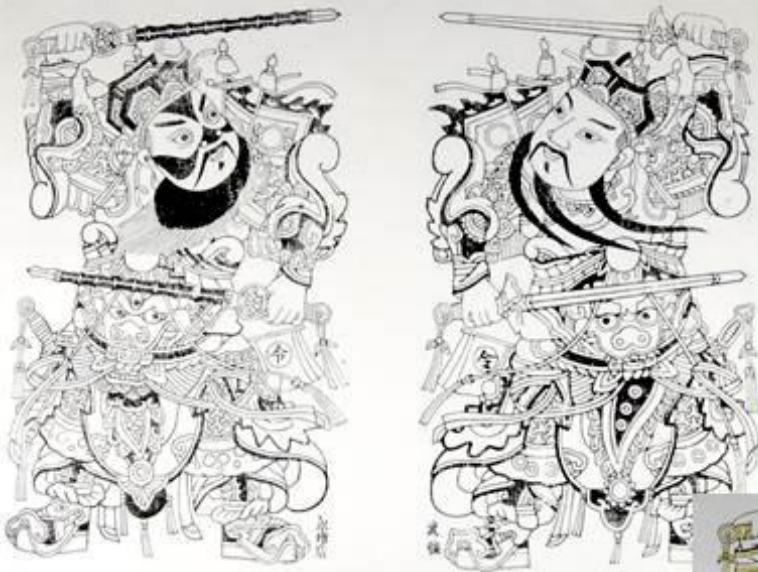
Door Guards
Chinese traditional New
Year paintings

7-22 February , 2016
Chinese Spring Festival
Room 3



Print process

The prints of these two door gods were made with the wooden printing blocks that are also in the British Museum collection.



In order to save wood, each block is carved on both sides and therefore can be used to impress two colours. Two blocks were used for each figure.



The first impression would show black outlines, followed by yellow, red and blue. The green areas are yellow overprinted with blue.



In order to align the colours precisely within the black outlines, the wooden blocks had to be accurately positioned on the large sheet of paper.



Some of the door guards

Han dynasty
202B.C.-A.D.220

神荼 郁垒
Shen Tu and Yu Lei



Jin and the southern
and northern dynasty
A.D.266-A.D.589

鸡
chicken



Sui and Tang dynasty
A.D.581-A.D.907

那罗延 迦毗罗
Na Luoyan and Jia Piluo



Ming dynasty
A.D.1368-A.D.1644

秦琼 尉迟恭
Qin Qiong and YuChi Gong



裴元庆 李元霸
Pei Yuanqing and Li Yuanba



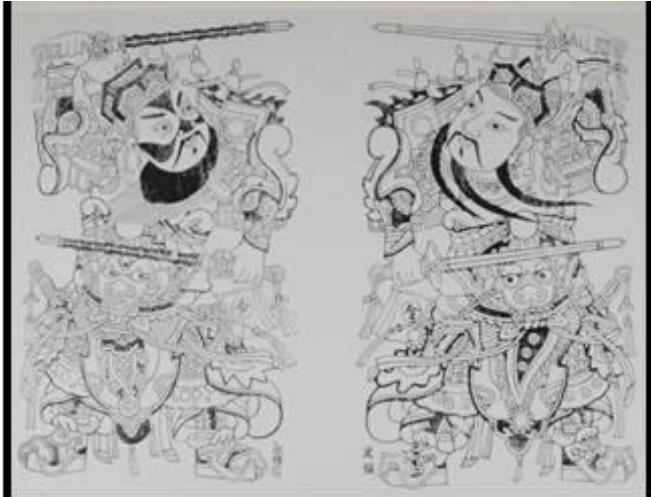
Qing dynasty
A.D.1636-A.D.1912

赵公明 燃灯道人
Zhao Gongming and
Randeng Daoren



钟馗
Zhong Kui





Preface

As one typical Chinese traditional art, Door guard painting is one of the earliest New Year paintings. Worship of door guard can trace back to the worship of nature phenomena and Faith in ancient, that is the awe of nature, the fear of disaster, the remember of ancestors, and the desire for happiness in human's brain.

Door guard painting has a long history in China, and it is the ancient Chinese art that was widely spread, greatly impacted on Chinese daily life. Door guard painting was selected as one of the national "five worship" in the Han Dynasty. Meanwhile, Door guard painting began to get into ordinary people's life from sacrificial rites of state, and gradually become one of the folk art. Today, people often post door guard paintings on doors on Chinese New Year Festival (Chinese Spring Festival), as a protection against evil spirits, praying good luck in the coming year. It is an important custom of Chinese Spring Festival.

1 what is Door Guard?

Door Guard is the Chinese gatekeeper in the folk faith and it is one of the most popular guards in china.

2 When the worship of Door Guard was popular in China?

The worship of Door Guard has been in China for a long time. in spring and autumn period and Warring States period, the records of "sacrifice in spring" can be found in the book "Zaji. Quli". Door guard painting was chosen as one of "five worship arts".

The word " Door Guard ", firstly appeared in the book "Li Ji" in Warring States period to the Qin and Han Dynasties (475 BC to 221 BC for Warring States, 221 B.C. to 220 A.D for Qin and Han Dynasties). The fairy tale, that is, Shen tu and Yu Lei caught ghosts to feed a tiger, was recorded in the important ancient book "ShanHaiJing" In the pre Qin period. The profile of Ancient hero Cheng Qing, gradually became the prototype of military door Guard in the Han Dynasty.

3 why Door Guard paintings were posted on doors in Chinese spring festival?

Chinese Door Guard paintings, which are posted on the doors, are not only for decorative purpose, but also for belief in guard. The ancient people believed that Door Guard can brought security, peace, happiness auspice and exorcism.

The faith of Door Guard spread so far. Chinese people often post the Door Guard paintings on doors to pray good luck while the New Year is coming.

Posting Door Guard paintings on doors becomes an important

4 Who is Door Guard?

Door Guard is "God", derived from mythology. According to different periods and different areas, beside Shen Tu and Yu Lei, Qin Qiong, Yuchi Gong, Zhong Kui, Wen Jiao, Yue Fei, Zhao Yun, Zhao Gongming, randeng daoren and etc are also regarded as Door Guard.

In addition, Door Guard can be divided into the Literati Door Guard and the Military Door Guard. Military Door Guard, such as Qin Qiong, Yuchi Gong, is posted on the yard door face to the street. The Literati Door Guard, who is dressed in robes of the civil service, is posted on the courtyard door. Door guard painting of children guard is often posted on the Interior door.

5 Why Qin Qiong and Yuchi Gong were selected as Door Guards?

Qin Qiong and YuChi Gong, who were the founding heroes of Tang Dynasty, are the most famous door guards. They have been regarded as Door Guards since Ming Dynasty.

According to legend, Li Shimin(Jan.28th ,598 AD(or Jan.23rd 599AD) –July 10th 649AD), the emperor of Tang dynasty, felt uncomfortable one day, and he heard the devil crying outside the palace. Qin Qiong advised Li, he would like to be the palace door guard at night with YuChi Gong for him. Li was happy and let the two people stand on both sides of the palace door at night. And then all were ok that night. Li awarded them. Considering the hard work of night door guarding, Li asked the painter to drawing the two people and posted the paintings on the palace doors. The uncomfortable feelings of Li disappeared from then on. Some good, must be followed, people began to serve two men as door guards.

The profiles of the two door guards, Qin Qiong and Yuchi Gong,

A Pair of door guards, Qin Qiong and Yuchi Gong

Multi-colour woodblock print on paper

1980s-1990s

Wuqiang Museum, Hebei province, China, Asia

Door guard painting is one of the earliest type Paintings for Chinese New Year (spring festival). Among many door guards, Qin Qiong and Yuchi Gong, who were the founding hero of Tang Dynasty, are the most famous guards.

Door guard paintings can be divided into several forms, such as painting, printing and printing with hand-painted. In this print, the right person is Qin Qiong, who is holding a pair of copper Jian. The other person is Yuchi Gong, who is holding a pair of Whips. The painting is symmetrical full, vivid, colorful, and highly decorative.