ABSTRACT

New-Year painting, a folk art, is one of the most treasured cultural heritages of the Chinese people. Inspired by mythological and historical traditions, such paintings epitomize the traditional beliefs and moral and social customs of the people. Initially hand painted, the advent of wood-block printing technique had contributed to their popularization. With unique and diverse creativity in content, composition, graphics and colouring differing markedly from those of classical paintings, they manifest a simple and unpretentious folk style of the Chinese people.

This dissertation examines three aspects of Chinese New-Year painting, namely its historical development, regional variations of themes and artistic styles as well as its symbolic meanings of the subjects.

Though the rural practice of displaying paintings on festive occasions has eroded because of changing social environment, those of auspicious themes which depict wealth, longevity, harmony and happiness will never lose their appeal. On the other hand, New-Year painting as an art form has begun to gain recognition owing to its ever refining craftsmanship and artistic values.