

The Story of
Wan-Nian's Calendar
萬年曆

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and illustrated by Jian Zhi Qiu

Chinese Festivals
中國傳統節慶

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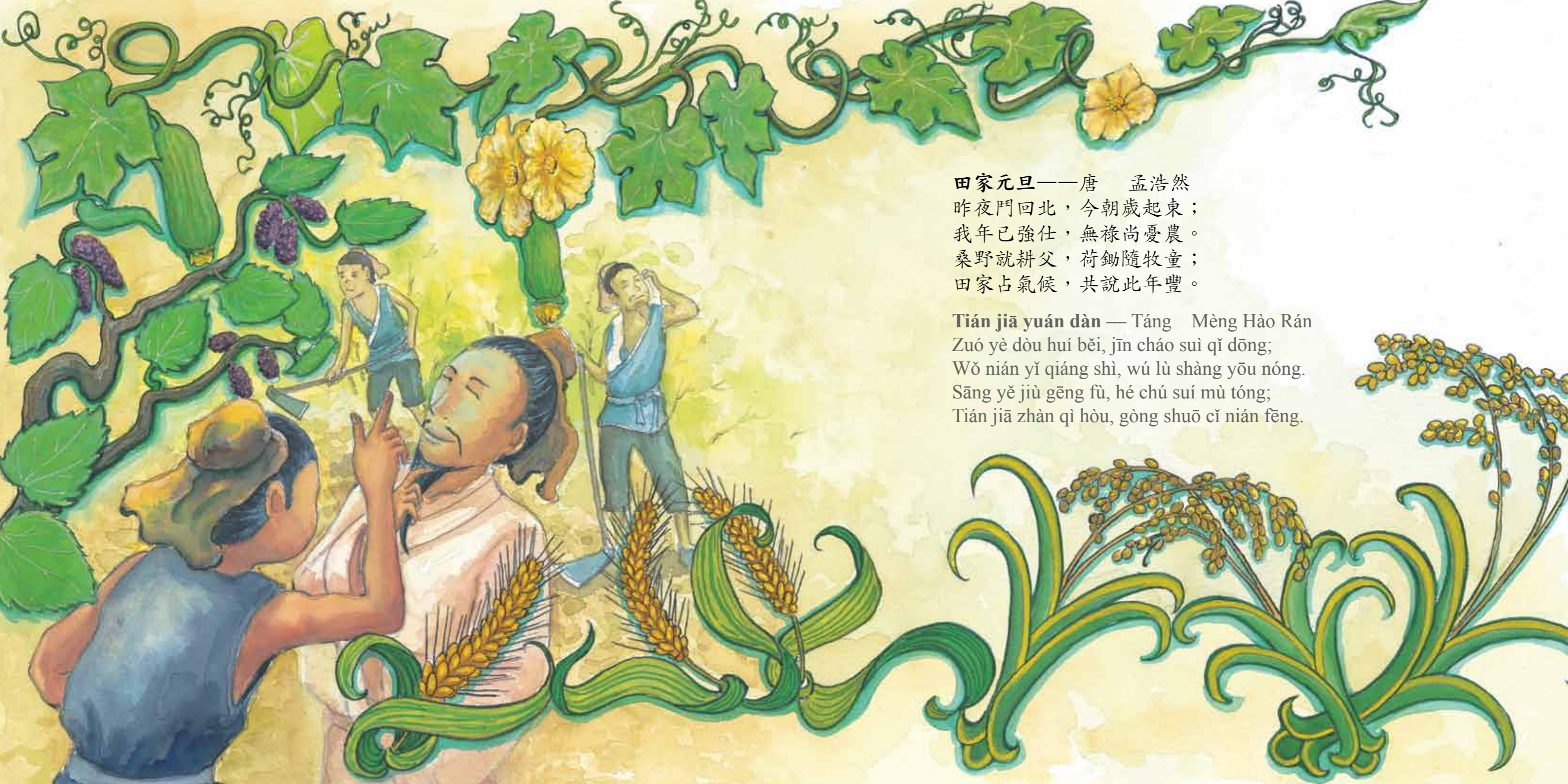
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田家元旦——唐 孟浩然
昨夜鬥回北，今朝歲起東；
我年已強仕，無祿尚憂農。
桑野就耕父，荷鋤隨牧童；
田家占氣候，共說此年豐。

Tián jiā yuán dàn — Táng Mèng Hào Rán
Zuó yè dòu huí běi, jīn cháo suì qǐ dōng;
Wǒ nián yǐ qiáng shì, wú lù shàng yōu nóng.
Sāng yě jiù gēng fù, hé chú suí mù tóng;
Tián jiā zhàn qì hòu, gòng shuō cǐ nián fēng.

詩意

昨天夜裏，北斗星又出現在北方，今天是元旦，一年的第一天，當太陽從東方升起，新的一年就開始了。我已經是四十歲的強仕之年，雖然沒有官職，但仍掛心著農事。農夫們在種滿桑樹的田野裏耕作，我走近他們，一邊拿起鋤頭和牧童一起工作，一邊和他們談論桑啊麻啊農作物生長的情形。農家人根據自然氣候推測，都說這一年是豐收年。

A New Year for the Tian Family.
A poem by Meng Hao-Ran, from the Tang Dynasty

Last evening the Plough was in the northern sky; now morning comes from the east.

I'm already in my forties; without any official position, I worry about my life as a farmer.

Here is the field of mulberries; I take a hoe and work with the shepherd boys.


The Tian family all say it is going to be a plentiful harvest because of the weather.



Wan-Nian was a young woodman and that day he was leaving home to cut wood as usual. His father stood by the front door and sighed. 'Ah, with a poor crop, we cannot be sure of three meals a day. Luckily, we have you to cut wood and sometimes to hunt wild animals in the mountains. Even then, we barely make a living.' Wan-Nian's wife A-Zi frowned. 'The crops are poor because the weather is not right for the seasons these days. A weatherman said the seasons are wrong because people have offended the God, and to get our normal weather back people must respect the God.'

萬年是個年輕的樵夫，這天他像往常一樣準備出門去砍柴。他爹爹在門口嘆了一口氣說：「唉！收成不好，有一餐沒一餐的。還好我們家有你上山砍柴，偶而打一些野味回來，勉強還能過活。」萬年的妻子阿紫皺著眉頭歎氣。「收成不好都是因為節令亂掉。節令官曾告訴皇上，因為人們得罪天神，所以節令才會不正常，要回歸正常，就要祭拜天神。」





‘So the Emperor fasted and bathed and then he led all the government officials to worship the God at the Temple of Heaven. He commanded the ordinary people to worship the God too. But still the seasons don’t have their normal weather.’ A-Zi continued. Wan-Nian looked up at the sky. ‘Perhaps it’s because our calendar doesn’t keep time with the seasons anymore,’ he said. ‘I wonder if we could find a better way to measure time.’

「於是皇上齋戒沐浴，率領百官，親自往天壇祭祀天神，也傳令百姓祭拜天神，可是節令還是照樣混亂。」阿紫繼續說。萬年看著天空。「也許是因為我們的曆法對不上季節，」他說，「到底要怎麼找出計算時間的方法呢？」



When Wan-Nian presented the calendar, the Emperor was impressed by his perseverance and hard work. 'In memory of your contribution to our calendar, the calendar shall be named after you. Also, you will be raised to the status of a god and become the god of longevity,' said the Emperor.

After that, during the Chinese New Year Festival, people hung portraits of the god of longevity on their walls in memory of the saintly Wan-Nian. The calendar he created is the Chinese lunar calendar which is still used today for Chinese festivals and the New Year.

當萬年把自己創造的曆法獻給國君時，國君深深被他研究曆法的執著精神與毅力感動，「為了紀念你創造的曆法的功績，就將這個曆法命名為『萬年曆』吧，同時加封你為『日月壽星』」。

從此以後，人們在過年時會掛上壽星圖，據說就是為了紀念德高望重的萬年。而萬年所創造的「萬年曆」，也就是現在中國的「農曆」。

Did you know?

Although the solar calendar is now used worldwide and is commonly accepted in modern Chinese society, traditional farmers still like the Chinese lunar calendar because they believe the phases of the moon influence the life of their crops and show the best time to cultivate. Agriculture is a foundation of Chinese culture and many festivals that originate from it are still part of Chinese daily life, such as Spring Festival and Lantern Festival for Chinese New Year, Tomb-Sweeping Festival for the memory of ancestors, Dragon Boat Festival for the importance of health care, Double Seventh Festival for Chinese Valentines, Moon Festival for family reunion, Double Ninth Festival for respect to the elders, and so on. Beautiful legends and romantic stories about these festivals can be found in Chinese literature.

賞析：

雖然中國自民國元年採用世界通行的陽曆作為國曆，但由於中國以農立國，在傳統社會中，農民喜歡用農曆，並以此作為民俗節慶和耕種等農時的依據，所以許多沿用農曆的歲時節慶，仍活躍於日常生活中，伴隨著神奇美妙的傳說，和浪漫動人的故事，表現在一些詩詞裡。如：除舊佈新、普天同慶的元旦春節、元宵節；慎終追遠的寒食節、清明節；驅邪保健的端午節；牛郎織女相會的七夕；月圓人圓的中秋節；登高敬老的重陽節等等都是。

