

Culture Revealed in the Forbidden Drama *Li Jing Ji*

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Abstract

This study presents the drama *Li Jing Ji* that was forbidden to be performed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in China. The research purpose is to reveal the societal and economical culture at that time. We first organize the data with the financial keywords ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ in the lyrics. After a brief comparison between their collocations and meanings, we examine the data from the aspects of eating, clothing, housing, transportation, amusement, society and nature for the culture presentation.

Keywords: language and culture, lyrics, drama, economic expressions

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1. Introduction

Culture means the traditional behavior values [1], beliefs, schemas, and implicit theories [2] which is developed by a community or society of human. The practice of culture makes the group “distinct and exclusive” [3]. Culture can be inherited to next generations but it can also prevail in a certain period of time only [1]. Scholars delve into various aspects of studies of language and culture, such as culture in letters [4], in mobile telephony [5], in movies [6] [7], in showing emotion [8] as well as in the form of greeting [9]. For example, Fujiki [6] probed into texts in movie posters and targeted to find out the formation of new visual environment in interwar Japan. Caldwell-Harris, Kronrod and Yang [8] investigated culture in different areas and indicated that Chinese people do not express their love and affection verbally. Instead, they are more likely to show it by offering help or care. In contrast, in western culture, people use more emotion expressions and regard saying “I love you” to their beloved ones as a way of making them feel loved.

Li Jing Ji (荔鏡記) is a love story. It is the common repertory of many operas and is known as one of the Top Four Chinese Dramas¹, but it was banned in the Ming and Qing periods. This work has appealed to linguists’ attention to research on the language use (e.g., [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16]). Nevertheless, little research has worked on *Li Jing Ji* regarding language and culture. The current study aims to delve into this issue.

We focus on the societal and economical culture at that time. The research questions are:

(1) How do ‘gold’ and ‘silver’² perform linguistically in the drama?

(2) What cultural background, in terms of economic aspects, is presented behind the text lyrics? This study is a part of an interdisciplinary project that focuses on cultural and economic expressions. We therefore take the starting point of observing ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ related expressions in this story to reveal the culture in the background at that time.

The bulk of this study is organized in the following way. After an introduction, section 2 introduces the drama *Li Jing Ji*. Section 3 is a general presentation of the data we have retrieved. We first show the financial keywords ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ with the collocations involved. Section 4 analyzes the data concerning cultural aspects, and then continues to show the economy and society presented in the text lyrics in terms of eating, clothing, housing, transportation, amusement, society and nature in that area when the drama was forbidden to be performed. At last, section 5 gives a concluding remark.

2. The Drama *Li Jing Ji*

Li Jing Ji (荔鏡記, dating back to AD 1566), also known as Legend of Litchi Mirror or Chen San and Wu Niang (陳三五娘, Mr. Chen San and Miss Huang Wu Niang), is a legendary story from the Ming Period (AD 1368-1644). It is a play with a mixture of Chaozhou and Quanzhou Southern Min dialects, and here we take the Jiajing edition. This play is generally in a form of Qupai or qupai ti the melodic mode-based vocal form of Chinese opera. The story of romantic love in *Li Jing Ji* contradicts traditional matchmaker

¹ The Top Four Dramas are *Li Jing Ji*, *The Love Eterne* (梁山伯與祝英台, also known as *Shanbo Yingtai*), *Romance of the West Chamber* (西廂記, also known as *Shixiji*), and *Lu Mengzheng* (呂蒙正) [17].

² Convention:

‘’ financial keywords or translation, e.g. ‘gold’

[] lyric lines, e.g. [2071]

DE possessive modifier



marriages that were decided by the parents in China at that time; therefore the play was banned in the Ming and Qing periods. The author of the play is unknown. The story started when Chen San and Huang Wu Niang met at a Chinese lantern festival (see section 4.2 below for the culture of this festival). They fell in love, but due to family financial imbalances, they went through difficulties. Huang's father accepted a proposal for her from a rich young man, Lin Da. Wu Niang wrapped a litchi in her handkerchief and Chen San disguised himself as a mirror-making craftsman as the story continued and the beloved ones eloped. The title of the drama *Li Jing Ji* (荔鏡記 literally: litchi-mirror story) follows the name of the fruit (li zhi 荔枝 'litchi') and the mirror (jing zi 鏡子) whose cultural features involved will be explained in the next sections.

This story originates from the areas Chao Zhou and Quan Zhou, China. The text is written in Southern Min, the dialect mainly spoken along the southeast coast of China, Taiwan, and by the large emigrant diaspora from these areas in Southeast Asia. *Li Jing Ji* is known as the first vernacular publication in Southern Min. The phonetic transcription of Southern Min in this study adopts the system available in the Dictionary of Common Words in Taiwan Southern Min Dialect [18].

The scripts and lyrics are taken from Studying of The Digital Book Fair [19]. The scripts contain 3006 lyric lines. Some lines consist of only one-word answers, such as *sī* 是 'yes', and some lines may include as many as four to seven sentences. We first present the data with the financial keywords 'gold' and 'silver' in the lyrics; 'gold' appears 97 times and 'silver' 68 times. It is noted that some lines contain no financial words, yet they are synonyms of financial expressions and reveal important aspects of Chinese culture, for example *buat-sió-kiong-uê-té* 襪小弓鞋短 'sock-small-bow-shoes-short; small socks and little shoes' [2433], which actually refers to three-inch feet, the famous Chinese culture *sann tshùn-kim-liàn*

三寸金蓮 'three-inch-gold-lotus' in the era. After a brief comparison between their collocations and meanings, we examine all the lyric lines from the aspects of economics and society, including eating, housing, and amusement, to show the culture at that time.

Linguistic sign act as cultural semiotic [20]. People can observe a culture through its language. Language performance is conventionalized [21] because language comprises its users' historical and cultural backgrounds and the ways they live and think [22]. In this sense, the connotation can be incomprehensible for non-native speakers [23]. Bail [24] proposes that with the outgrowth of digital technologies, parsing text-based data is can be efficiently. However, for big data typically include little information about social context, big data methods should not act as a replacement but a complement [24]. To sum, language and culture are intricately interwoven because language manifests culture, and is influenced and shaped by culture [22]. We cannot learn a language without understanding its culture. On the other hand, we can peep through a language into its culture.

3. 'Gold' and 'silver' expressions in *Li Jing Ji*

The financial keywords 'gold' and 'silver' do not seem to be significant in number. However, their appearance in the drama text shows not only the semantic and pragmatic roles of the financial word usages, but also the prosperity of a rich family or low social status in the absence of this financial advantage. This comparison is exactly the dilemma of the leading characters, Wu Niang and Chen San. The collocations of 'gold' and 'silver' in the lyrics in terms of meaning are listed in Table 1. 'Gold' meaning money appears 36 times (36/97, 37.11%) in the lyrics, and often collocates with 'silver'. In addition, 'gold' means rich,



someone respectful or noble, or something valuable. Table 1 gives each meaning an example together with the number of the lyric line.

‘Silver’ meaning money appears 48 times (48/68, 70.59%) in the lyrics. This is a much higher percentage because silver ingots were the currency at that time. The reason why Chen San and Wu Niang’s love was not accepted by the family was because of the wide difference in wealth between the two families. Besides,

‘silver’ marked expressions also mean rich, someone respectful or noble, or something valuable.

Around fifth and sixth centuries, gold and silver vessels, such as gold and silver wine cups and dishes, were introduced into China and fired Chinese elite’s enthusiasm for living in luxury [25]. Consequently, when ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ are used to describe someone or something, the value of the people at that time is revealed which in turn displays the culture behind the scene. These are the foci of the next sections.

Table 1. Distribution of meanings of ‘gold’ and ‘silver’

Gold	percentages	Examples
money	37.11 %	<i>tsuî-lâng-siu-lí-kim-gîn</i> 誰人收你金銀 [1538] ‘who-people-take-your-gold-silver; who received your money’
rich	4.12%	<i>iā-ū-tsu-kuan-hōng-kè-liân-kim-tshai</i> 也有珠冠鳳髻連金釵 [1194] ‘also got bead hat and phoenix bun with golden hair pin’
respectful, noble	1.03%	<i>kim-pńg-kuà-miá</i> 金榜掛名 [366] ‘gold-board-hang-name; to succeed in a government examination’
valuable	11.34 %	<i>kim-ín- gîn-tshok-tuà-kim-pái</i> 金印銀簇帶金牌 [632] ‘golden seal, silver belt, golden plate’
Silver	percentages	Examples
money	70.59%	<i>guá-ū-it- tsinn-gîn</i> 我有一錢銀 [1983] ‘I-got-one-money-silver; I have a cent’
rich	7.35%	<i>ū-kim-ū-gîn-ū-tshân-tuē</i> 有金有銀有田地 [2092] ‘got-gold-got-silver-got-farmland; got gold, silver, and farmland’
respectful, noble	1.47%	<i>gîn-sái</i> 銀使 [2585] ‘silver-messenger; silver officer’
valuable	11.76%	<i>gîn-tâi-lah-tsik-muá-thiann-tiong</i> 銀臺蠟燭滿廳中 [2987] ‘silver-stage-candle-full-hall-middle; silver candleholders and candles are full of the hall’

4. Culture revealed in *Li Jing Ji*

Expressions can show culture. Let us take two Mandarin expressions as example: *jīn guī xù* 金龜婿 ‘gold-turtle-husband’ and *luò yè guī gēn* 落葉歸根 ‘fall-leaves-return-root’ as examples. The former *jīn guī xù* ‘a rich son-in-law’ shows that this society admires others for having a son-in-law from a wealthy or politically influential family. The latter *luò yè guī*

gēn ‘what comes from the soil will return to the soil’ reveals that Chinese values on their origin and their ancestors are revered and important. People can make a living away from home, travel around the world in the prime of their life, but they like to return to their native land in the end in Chinese culture, just as falling leaves return back near the roots.



In the following, the cultural background will be first observed from the use of ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ expressions and presented in section 4.1. Following that, an overall view of the text in terms of cultural features such as clothing and housing will be given in section 4.2.

4.1 From the use of ‘gold’ and ‘silver’

The financial expressions ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ highlight Chinese culture. Gold is a precious stone and it is an expensive jewel. We see a rich family’s house is full of gold, for examples (1a) - (1c) in Table 2, where one can sleep under “golden curtains” on a “golden pillow” and a “bed made of jade”, as (1f).

Examples (2a) - (2f) are ‘gold’ metaphors. A daughter of a rich family is called *tshian-kim-sió-tsiá* 千金小姐 [1536] (2b), a man usually does not kneel because his *sit-e-ū-nġ-kim* 膝下有黃金 ‘knees-under-got-gold’ [1824] (2c), and when someone’s name is written on the golden board *kim-pńg-kuà-miâ* 金榜掛名 ‘gold-board-hang-name’, he is acknowledged as an excellent learned scholar because he was successful in a government examination [366] (2a). The examination system in the old days should be introduced. The imperial examination called *kho-ki* 科舉 lasted for one thousand and five hundred years in

Chinese history. In the years before this examination was held, the officials were said to gain their jobs through personal connections like being relatives or good friends of someone in the office. Once a scholar passed the imperial examination, he could turn his life from poor to eminent or turn the family fate anew because he would get a good job or high rank in the governmental office. There is a similar examination in Taiwan for new personnel in the governmental offices, which offer jobs with secured retirement pensions. However, the role of the examination is far less important than that from the old days.

In addition to the functional use of gold and its linguistic metaphorical extension, the use of ‘gold’ in *Li Jing Ji* reveals many cultural features at that time. For example, religion *s nġ-miâ-hah-hun* 算命合婚 ‘count-life-combine-marriage; fortune telling arranges marriage’ [394] and traffic *tsġng-liġ-ū-tsit-lāng-khiâ-bé-iû-kue-tshġ* 前日有一人騎馬遊街市 ‘some days ago-have-someone-ride-horse-play around-street-city’ [1774]. The former shows that people could get married because of the fortune tellers’ prediction. The latter indicates that horses were transportation vehicles. We have more discussion about this aspect in section 4.2.

Table 2. Gold collocations and metaphors

Valuable	Gold metaphors
1a. <i>peh-bé-kim-an</i> 白馬金鞍 ‘white horse and golden saddle’ [632]	2a. <i>kim-pńg-kuà-miâ</i> 金榜掛名 ‘gold-board-hang-name; to emerge successful from a competitive examination’ [366]
1b. <i>tōng-lġp-siau-kim-tiōng-lāi</i> 同入銷金帳內 ‘with-in-melted down-gold-curtain-inside; go under golden curtain together’ [210]	2b. <i>kóo-sġ-tshian-kim-sió-tsiá-tōng-Muê hiunn-tsāi-tshái-lu-siōng</i> 古時千金小姐同梅香在綵縷上 ‘antiquity-thousands-gold-lady-with-Muê hiunn-at the-colorful-string-up; in the old days, the rich family’s daughter and Muê hiunn were upstairs’ [734]
1c. <i>kim-lóo-lāi-pó-ah-hiunn-ian-bġ-bġ</i> 金爐內寶鴨香煙微微 ‘gold-furnace-inside-treasure-duck-joss stick-smoke-little-little; the joss sticks in the golden furnace is smoking’ [303]	2c. <i>lí-tiōng-hu-lāng-sit-e-ū-nġ-kim</i> 你丈夫人膝下有黃金 ‘your-husband-people-knee-under-got-yellow-gold; a man usually does not kneel’ [1824]
1d. <i>tshái-hōng-tsu-tsuá-kim-tāng</i> 綠鳳書紙金筒 ‘phoenix-book-paper-gold-tube; valuable writing and stationery’ [452]	2d. <i>būn-niū-á-khit-it-kim-giān</i> 問娘仔乞一金言 ‘ask-miss-beg-one-gold-sentence; ask the lady a suggestion’ [1841]



1e. <i>io-thâu-kim-tuà-lik-kong-san</i> 腰頭金帶綠公裳 'waist-head-gold-ribbon-green-official-skirt; valuable clothing' [2330]	2e. <i>bān-kim-sin-khu</i> 萬金身軀 'million-gold-body; a respectable or rich person' [2046]
1f. <i>kim-tsim-gik-tshng</i> 金枕玉床 'gold-pillow-jade- bed; expensive pillow and bed' [2681]	2f. <i>guân-siau-it-khik-tai' tshian-kim</i> 元宵一刻值千 金 'Lantern Festival-the moment-worth- thousands-gold; a moment in Lantern Festival is of great worth' [2461]

There are some expressions directly related to 'gold' and their culture that we would like to reveal now, including traditional marriage customs, foot binding, religion, and the natural environment at that time.

Phìng-kim 聘金 'hire-gold' [1448] reveals a Chinese traditional marriage custom. Wu Niang's father accepted a gift of money presented by a matchmaker hired by the local tycoon, Lin Da, and wanted to marry Wu Niang to him. The *muê-lāng* 媒人 'medium-person; matchmaker' [1196] or *muê-î* 媒姨 'medium-aunt; matchmaker' [2092], *phìng-kim* 聘金 'hire-gold; money gift for a marriage' [1448], *phìng-lé* 聘禮 'a money gift presented to the family of the bride-to-be at the engagement ceremony' [2083] and *kè-tsng* 嫁妝 'dowry' [2124] all have to do with Chinese marriage customs. The setting of a society where marriages are set up by matchmakers and the concepts of love and freedom caused this drama to be banned. In ancient Chinese society, a marriage without the help of a matchmaker was considered a violation of etiquette. *Mng-tong-hōo-tui* 門當戶對 'families of equal standing' was important such as the lines [379] and [632] sing. Making a match by parents' order and matchmaker's words was common. Though resonance between two lovers might happen, the bridegroom's side would still need a matchmaker during the whole wedding process. The matchmaker acts as an intermediary from proposing a marriage, engaging in a marriage, and to the end of wedding ceremony. The matchmaker runs errands between families, contacting, coordinating, mediating details, perking up a feverish ambiance, blessings and so on.

The *buat-siō-kiong-uê-té* 襪小弓鞋短 'sock-small-bow-shoes-short; small socks and little shoes' [2433] is not a 'gold' expression as it seems to be. It however reveals a cruel custom at that time which purposely deformed body parts that actually lasted for about one thousand years in Chinese society. *Buat-siō-kiong-uê-té* literally describes *sann-tshùn-kim-liân* 三寸金蓮 'three-inch-gold-lotus; 10-millimeter feet'. Foot binding was common for women. Not until about year 1950 did this practice stop [26]. There are various tales about how this system started. According to Xu [27], the practice possibly originated from the emperor of the Southern Tang Period, Li Yu (937-978). It was said that emperor Li had a concubine named Yao Niang, who was charming and coquettish and was good at dancing and singing. Once the emperor asked Yao Niang to bind her feet in white silk into the shape of the crescent moon, and performed a lotus dance ballet-like on the points of her feet. Yao Niang was described as so graceful that she "skimmed on top of golden lotus". This was then spread in the Song dynasty and eventually became common among all the classes. Eventually, bound feet was so normal that without doing it a woman could not marry. It was an important question for matchmakers to ask about the size of the lady's feet before she went on for *phìng-lé* 聘禮 'a money gift presented to the family of the bride-to-be at the engagement ceremony' [2083] and so on. A pair of tiny small feet equaled beauty, attraction and financial welfare. Foot binding made a woman's gait more difficult. They had to swing from side to side to balance their footsteps which was said to satisfy desires of men in patriarchal Chinese history.



On the other hand, from *kim-lôo* 金爐 ‘golden furnace; ghost money burner’ [394], we see the religious culture in the drama. The horror of the religion in that area can be seen, for example, *im-si* 陰司 ‘cloudy-official; nether world’ [865], *uan-hûn* 冤魂 ‘injustice-spirit; ghosts of wrongly accused’ [2406], and *phuànn-kuann-siáu-kúí* 判官小鬼 ‘judge-little-ghost; goblin’ [961]. They all have to do with Buddhism or Daoism. Related terms are mentioned too, such as *Kuan-im* 觀音 ‘see-sound; the Bodhisattva of Compassion’ [368] and *biō-kháu* 廟口 ‘temple-mouth; the entrance to the temple’ [961]. Also the religious activities including, *kim-lôo* 金爐 ‘golden furnace; Ghost Money Burner’ [394], *sio-hiunn* 燒香 ‘burn-incense; burn incense’ [961], and *tsuá-tsûn* 紙船 ‘paper boat’ [2463], show superstition.

(3) Nature at that time in the poetic lyrics

- a. *kim-tsínn-ngóo-tông-hioh-loh-ki* 金井梧桐葉落枝, ‘gold-well-*Firmiana simplex*-leaf-fall-branch; a grave or a well with sculptures and The leaves fall from the branches of the *firmiana simplex* (wutong) tree beside a golden well.’ [2114]
- b. *Liân-hue-khai-piàn-buán-tuē. Hue-âng-kiōng-liú-liók* 蓮花開遍滿地. 花紅共柳綠 ‘lotus-open-all around-floor, flower-red-with-willow-green; lotuses bloom everywhere. Reds of flowers match greens of willows’ [1598]
- c. *Tsít-lûn-kong-guât-tsiàu-kiàn-liú-iâu-kim, khing-hong-tshe-sàng-liân-hue-bú* 一輪光月照見柳搖金, 輕風吹送蓮花舞 ‘one-wheel-light-moon-shine-see-willow-shake-gold, light-wind-blow-sent-lotus-dance; the golden light of the full moon twinkles in the shaking willow(s), while the lotuses dance with the breeze.’ [377]

- d. *sih-sut-nāu-tshiu-siann* 蟋蟀鬧秋聲 ‘crickets bustle with noise and excitement in autumn’ [2022]

Then poetic lyrics remind the audience of the natural environment in Southeast China, such as example (3). Willow and lotus are common in the Southeast China. The lyrics describe lotus in the wind (example (3b) and (3c)). Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) is the aquatic plant of the genus *Nelumbo*, of the Nelumbonaceae family. This plant is an aquatic perennial originates in China and is commonly planted in ponds. Lotus carries strong cultural connotations in a Chinese community. It is the symbol of purity and elegance. The philosopher Chou Dun-Yi wrote the prose “The Love for Lotus” in year 1063 in which he stated his love to lotus because this flower grew from mud, yet unstained. The two important Chinese books *The Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Běn Cǎo Gāng Mù* 本草綱目) and *Explaining and Analyzing Characters* (*Shuō Wén Jiě Zì* 說文解字) have specific descriptions about lotus. The fruits and seeds of lotus are part of Chinese cuisine and can also be used as medicine. On March 14, 2008, the post office in Hong Kong launched the special theme of stamps and advertised that lotus should be the “Hong Kong City Flower”.

Another scene that comes into view is from the description of *kim-li* 金鯉 ‘gold-carp’ [2941] and *sih-sut* 蟋蟀 ‘cricket’ [2022]. Rich people liked to have gold carps swimming in the ponds in their gardens. The bustle of the crickets (example (3d)) describes the scene when Wu Niang took a walk at night. Crickets are kept in cages as pets in Spain and Portugal. In China, there are cricket clubs where also cricket fighting contests are organized.

(4) The ‘silver’ related lines show economy and bribery

- a. *gín-tâi-lah-tsik-muá-thiann-tiong* 銀臺蠟燭滿廳中 ‘silver-stage-candle-full-hall-



- middle; the hall is full of silver candleholders and candles.’ [2987]
- b. *ngóo-būn-lí, to-siáu-gîn-tsu-sòng-ú-ti-tsiu* 我問你, 多少銀子送與知州 ‘I-ask-you, how much-silver-son-give-to-know-state; let me ask you, how much money would you like to send to the magistrate of a prefecture?’ [481]
- c. *iōng-gîn-tánn-tiám-gê-mńg* 用銀打點衙門 ‘use-silver-bribe-office-door; to use money to bribe the bureaucrats of the government office’ [961]

‘Silver’ is most often used to refer to money in *Li Jing Ji* because silver was monetized based on the silver tael at that period of time. A silver ingot is about NT\$3776 or Euro 115. Accordingly, *gîn-gōo-tsap-lióng* 銀五十兩 ‘silver-five-ten-ael; 50 silver ingots’ are valuable and worth a lot. Silver objects are thus valuable (4a). In similar reading, lines [481] and [961] in example (4b) and (4c), respectively, reveal bribery at that time.

4.2 From the lyrics

Let us have an overall view of the text in the drama in terms of cultural features. Table 3 lists some significant cultural features.

Table 3. Significant cultural features revealed in Li Jing Ji

Cultural items	Role in the drama	Cultural feature at that time
Traffic		
Horse	Transportation vehicle; Chen San meets Wu Niang when he passes by a street on horse.	Transportation vehicle for officials and rich people.
Boat	Someone crosses the river in a boat and is not charged.	Important transportation vehicle in this area
Sedan chair	The vehicle that officials took when going out, also owned by wealthy families	Represent social status
Lotus feet	Wu Niang has small socks and little shoes.	The way that women with bound feet walked was ballet-like and attractive to men.
Clothing		
Color of the clothes	A Civil Official of the third rank wears green garments.	Distinguish official rank as well as wealth of a family
Housing		
Mirror	Chen San disguised himself as a mirror-making craftsman	Mirror-making was a job
Eating		
Litchi	The token wrapped in an handkerchief for Wu Niang’s love to Chen San	A kind of fruit in the area
Glutinous rice balls	A food was eaten on Yuanxiao Festival.	Family members ate glutinous rice balls together for harmony and happiness.
Rice	Niang was so depressed that she did not want to have <u>rice</u> or <u>tea</u> .	Staple foodstuffs in Southeast China
Tea	Wu Niang is thirsty and asks for tea.	Popular drink
Entertainment		
The Lantern Festival	The time when Chen San and Wu Niang meet each other.	Significant festival in Chinese area.
Crickets	The crickets chirped loudly when Wu Niang took a walk at night.	The noisy sound of crickets indicates autumn is approaching.
Lotus	Lotuses bloom beautifully outside Wu Niang’s window.	Nice scenery in Southeast China
Embroidery	Wu Niang is able to embroider.	Lady’s ability



Society		
Imperial examination	Chen San's brother passed the examination and saved Chen San	A system in China for about 1500 years
Silver ingot	Currency	Currency for some time in China
Emperor	One emperor's words were superior to everything.	Emperor reigned over China and their words were superior to everything.
Yue Lao	He should go to Wu Niang for arranging marriage.	A Chinese believed love god
Matchmaker	She is sent by Lin Da to Wu Niang's father.	Marriage had no freedom and was made match by matchmaker
Sound the night watches	Wu Niang and Chen San hear the sound and took off to elope through the help of Wu Niang's <u>maid</u>	It was a time-reporting culture in China.

The following discussion will follow the order of eating, clothing, housing, transportation, amusement, society and nature.

In terms of eating culture, the lyric line [1475] (example (5a)) sings about rice and tea pointing out the staple foodstuffs in Southeast China. It might not be exactly tea for drinking and rice for this meal, but they represent the drink and the meal just like *Brot und Kaffee* 'bread and coffee' in Germany for the staple foodstuffs. Tea is important in this Chinese area. Examples (5b) and (5c) indicate how tea was usually prepared and the function of tea. To prepare tea, we now just need a tea bag and hot water, but it should be brewed with low heat and prepared properly.

(5) Eating and clothing culture

- a. *tê-pn̄g-lâi-khit-lí-sit* 茶飯來乞你食
'tea-rice-come-beg-you-eat; give you tea and rice for meal' [1475]
- b. *tsuann-tê-thng* 煎茶湯 'decoct-tea-soup;
to decoct herbal tea' [2256]
- c. *it-uánn-kiàn-khe-tê, kái-liáu-niû-á-būn*
一碗建溪茶, 解了娘仔悶 'one-bowl-Kian Khe tea, solve-miss-bored; a bowl of Kian Khe tea to ease your tension and relieve boredom' [2313]
- d. *guān-ngôo-jī-láu-lâi-tsú, sin-tioh-pan-i-gōo-sik-hiú* 願吾兒老萊子, 身著斑衣五色裘
'hope-my-son-old-Lai Zi, body-wear-spotted-clothes-five-color-coat;

may my son old-Lai Zi wear colorful clothes' [36]

- e. *gū-tân-sam-iū-bé-kò, nāi-tsi-pha-ē-lik-i-lóng* 遇陳三遊馬過, 荔枝拋下綠衣郎
'meet-Chen San-play-horse-pass, litchi-toss-down-green-clothes-man; seeing Chen San passing by on horse, (Wu Niang) tosses litchi to the man in green' [4]
- f. *i-gim-huê-hiunn-tsài-thuân-ínn* 衣錦回鄉再團圓
'wear-brocade-return-hometown-again-round-circle; someone returns to his hometown in silken robes and has a reunion (with e.g., the family)' [3000]

As for **clothing**, the lyric line [36] (5d) reminds us an older story that happened in Chun Qiu Period (770 B.C. – 476 B. C.). This line is discussed here but not below where we will discuss about Chinese literature, because the colorful clothing here is our focus. When color dyeing was not popular, regular people wore simple clothing with simple design, material and color, only nobles could afford colorful dress. The official rank could be distinguished by different colors and materials. A Civil Official of the third rank in the Ming Period wore green garments (5e). Social status could be determined by the color of the clothing too, because the color could represent how much power a person has. Therefore, when someone returned to his hometown in silken robes as the lyric



sings (5f), he returned home after making good and in glorious fashion. His erstwhile time is not compatible with his present success.

Speaking of **housing**, except for the discussion about ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ usages in section 4.1, we can further observe housing of a rich family by the doors, windows, halls and garden design. There was *phik-se* 碧紗 ‘dark green muslin’ [730] on windows, *tsu-liâm-gōo-sik-tshái* 珠簾五色彩 ‘pearl-curtain-five-color; colorful pearl curtain’, 錦屏 ‘brocade-screen; beautiful screen’ [1011] in the hall. Inner hall and *guā-thiann* 外廳 ‘outer hall’ [1920] were built. When there were celebrations at home, there would be *gîn-tâi-lah-tsik-muá-thiann-âng* 銀臺蠟燭滿廳紅 ‘silver-candleholder-full-hall-red; red candles on silver candleholders fill the hall’ [467]. The garden was designed with *kim-tsínn* 金井 ‘gold-well; a well with sculptures’, *ngôo-tóng* 梧桐 ‘*Firmiana simplex*’ [2114], *liân-hue* 蓮花 ‘lotus’ [730], and *tik* 竹 ‘bamboo’ [1578].

Since the drama focuses on the rich lady Wu Niang, her room is also described. Her daily activities give an account of how women were supposed to behave. They should *mng̃-put-tshut*, *hōo-put-líp* 門不出, 戶不入 ‘door-not-go out, door-no-enter; rarely leave home’ [642], only *guán-àm-tsīng-tsāi-tsí-hue-hn̄g-siunn-hue* 阮暗靜在只花園賞花 ‘we-dark-quiet-in-this-garden-appreciate-flower; just silently appreciate flowers in the garden’ [1416], *hū-lín-tsi-tik*, *put-tshut-kui- mng̃* 婦人之德, 不出閨門 ‘woman-person-DE-virtue, no-go out-lady’s chamber-door; staying at home is a woman’s virtue’ [140], therefore *sing-tióng-tsāi-tshim-kui* 生長在深閨 ‘grow-in-deep-lady’s chamber; grow up in a lady’s chamber’ [62]. She had a *pó-kiànn* 寶鏡 ‘treasure-mirror; nice decorated mirror’, *tsong-tâi* 妝臺 ‘dressing table’ [795], *kim-tsím-gik-tshn̄g* 金枕玉床 ‘gold pillow jade bed’ and *kim-tiòng* 金帳 ‘melted down-gold-curtain; golden curtain’ [210] in her *siù-pāng* 繡房

‘embroidery-room; girl’s bedroom’ [1578]. She would work on her *tshiah-siù* 刺繡 ‘thread-embroidery; embroidery’, having *pī* 婢 ‘maids’ and often *i-thang-bāng* 倚窗望 ‘lean-window-gaze; lean on the window and look’ [730].

(6) Transportation and amusement

- g. *tsún-tsài-guán-kuè* 船載阮過 ‘boat-take-me-over; taking a boat to cross over’ [2369]
- h. *tuā-kiō-sam-sù-lāng-kong* 大轎三四人扛 ‘big-sedan chair-three-four-people-lift; three to four people lifting the sedan chair’ [2107]
- i. *tshiah-siù* 刺繡 ‘thread-embroider; embroidery’ [1496]
- j. *khîm-kî-su-uē-ngóo-too-huē* 琴棋書畫我都會 ‘musical instrument-go-calligraphy-painting-I-all-can-do; I am able to play musical instrument, go, write calligraphy, and paint’ [59]
- k. *Siōng-ngôo-thau-tshut-kóng-hân-king* 姮娥偷出廣寒宮 ‘*Siōng Ngôo*-steal-out-wide-cold-palace; the goddess of the moon secretly goes out of the moon palace’ [2042]
- l. *tshui-sī-ing-ing-kiōng-tiunn-kióng-se-siunn-kì* 崔氏鶯鶯共張珙西廂記 ‘*Tiunn Ing Ing*-together-*Tiunn Kióng*-west-chamber-record; the two leading roles are in the west chamber’ [1682]
- m. *tiunn-kióng-ing-ing-tsîng-sio-gū* 張珙鶯鶯曾相遇 ‘*Tiunn Kióng-Ing Ing*-already-mutual-meet; *Tiunn Kióng* and *Ing Ing* had had ever met each other before’ [2046]
- n. *Ing-tâi-San-phik-uan-hûn-kiat-tshim* 英臺山伯冤魂結深 ‘*Ing Tâi-San Phik*-injustice-spirit-tie-deep; *Ing Tâi*’s and *San Phik*’s souls got unified’ [868]



o. *guāt-hā-nóo* 月下老 ‘moon-under-elder;

Chinese god of marriage’ [2580]

As for transportation, (6a) refers to boats and (6b) to sedan chairs. There are 13 words in the lyrics referring to boats and 10 times referring to sedan chairs, which point out two important transportation vehicles at that time. The traditional Chinese sedan chair consists of a chair and a window cabin. Usually two men, one in front and one at the back, lift it, similar to those vehicles in some areas in Europe. Sedan chairs of rich families were dragged by horses. Horses were important transportation vehicles in many areas in the world, also in Southeast China. 76 tokens mention horse in the lyrics. Horse riding was an identification of status and power at that time.

When we look at the aspect of **amusement**, not only did Wu Niang master embroidery (6c), but also play musical instrument, go, write calligraphy, and paint (6d). The embroidery provided a token for Chen to know Wu Niang’s love for him, and embroidery was a symbol for rich and refined ladies at that time. On the other hand, *khîm* 琴 ‘musical instrument Qin’, *kî* 棋 ‘go’, *su* 書 ‘calligraphy’, *uē* 畫 ‘painting’ were fine art for refined ladies or scholars in China. Musical instrument *Guqin* in ancient time could be made of jade and have five or seven strings. The game of go was usually played with 181 black pieces and 180 white pieces on a board. This game has been played in this area and in the broad China for more than two thousand years. As for *su*, writing was not easy when there were no pens. Chinese people wrote with ink and writing brushes and developed different styles of calligraphy such as regular, cursive, and running script. The scholar Stanley-Baker [28] expressed that “Calligraphy is sheer life experienced through energy in motion that is registered as traces on silk or paper, with time and rhythm in shifting space its main ingredients”. Calligraphy is an art. Chinese painting differs a great deal from painting in other areas of the

world. The traditional Chinese painting is in black and white. Styles like meticulous (Gong Bi painting), ink painting or freehand style vary in their brush strokes. Wu Niang was good at all these fine arts which were requirements of the honorable ladies in the past.

The Chinese legend about the goddess of the moon (example (6e) is recorded as well. The Chinese literature *Romance of the West Chamber* was mentioned several times, as in (6f) and (6g). The other literature is *The Love Eterne* (6h). Singing all these love stories in the drama, people pray to the Chinese “god” who is said to be able to unite persons in marriage (6i) for good luck in love and relationships.

We now turn the lens to the broader society at that time. Festival activity, occupation, farming rent system, official system, and the dark side of bribery will be discussed.

First, Lantern Festival has been an important Chinese celebration. Chen San and Wu Niang first met at the Lantern Festival when they enjoyed watching lanterns as *tshut-ke-khàn-ting* 出街看燈 ‘go out to watch the lantern show’ [93] indicates. The festival had become a festival with significance since the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – A.D. 25). It falls on the 15th day of the first lunar month, usually in February or March in the lunar calendar. People watch lanterns at the festival. Lanterns of various designs are hung in the streets and at the celebrating sites. Other activities like setting off fireworks, guessing lantern riddles and eating glutinous rice balls also take place. One can receive a little gift after giving a right answer to a riddle. The glutinous rice balls are also called *yuan-xiao*, and the festival is also called Yuanxiao Festival because Glutinous rice balls convey significant meaning for the Chinese people because the first lexeme ‘yuan’ in Yuan-xiao is a homophone for reunion; therefore family members like to come together and eat glutinous rice balls for harmony and happiness. They believe they are ceremonially and



truly one year older after having the glutinous rice balls since the turn of the new year (now 15 days later).

Second, *tánn-kenn* 打更 ‘sound the night watch’ [686] was a time-reporting culture in China. At the time when clocks and watches were not wide spread, to know the time at night depended on night watchmen. Sounding the night watches was a daily activity before year 1949 [29]. A night is divided into five night watch periods. At the start of each period, the night watchman strikes a gong to tell time, which is called “sound the night watches” [30]. Whenever people hear the sounds released from striking a gong, they know the time and subsequently do their routines.

Third, there were other occupations that are not available nowadays, such as *ūn sái* 運使 ‘transport messenger’ [2161], *buá kiànn sai hū* 磨鏡師傅 ‘rub-mirror-master; mirror-polishing craftsman’ [1798], *lôo pī* 奴婢 ‘maid’ [2332] and *tiān-hōo* 佃戶 ‘tenant farmer’ [2168]. A transport messenger was responsible for transporting, selling and buying gold, salt, iron, etc. from city to city [31]. A mirror-making craftsman produced, repaired or rubbed the copper mirrors, so that the mirrors could shine, reflect and be used. Chen San disguised himself as a mirror-making craftsman and sold himself to the rich Huang family when he wanted to come close to Wu Niang. The lady Wu Niang had maids to serve her. It was common for rich families to have maids and slaves. On the other hand, sharing tenancy was a system of agriculture in which a landowner allows a tenant to use the land in return for a share of the crops produced on the land. The system started when there were family illness, famine, expenses of wedding or funeral, debt and so on. At the time of Ming and Qing Periods (1368-1912), more than fifty percent of the fields were worked by tenants in the Province Jiang Su (eastern China). In mainland China, all land fields were state property which means all farmers were tenants of the country until agriculture taxes were canceled in 2006.

Fourth, it was the time when one emperor reigned and his words were superior to everything. Thus *tsit pang thian tsú tsiàu, sù-hái tsīn tsai bûn. Tsiàu su kàu, kuī thiann suan-thòk* 一封天子詔, 四海盡知聞. 詔書到, 跪聽宣讀 ‘one-letter of-the emperor-order, four-sea-end-know-heard, order-book-reach, kneel down-listen-read out’ [501] which means “an order from the emperor will be announced all over the country/world. When it arrives, people kneel down to listen to the announcement”. Orders from emperors were so important that everyone should kneel down to listen to the announcement. From this line, it is also clear that the emperors believed China was the world, which was one of the reasons that led to the Opium War (1840-1842).

Furthermore, Confucius teaching in this area is noted. The Chinese consider family and the emperor as the pillars of society. Thus, the value of *hàu-î-sū-tshin, toing-î-sū-kun* 孝於事親, 忠於事君 ‘filial piety is to serve the parents and patriotic piety is to be loyal to the emperor’ in line [13]. That is about relationships among children and parents, citizens and emperor, as which the teaching of Confucius in The Analects of Confucius (*Lún Yǔ* 論語) is highlighted. Thus in the drama, Chen San’s brother was about to take up his official post, but he worried about his parents, and thus *tsīn-tiong-put-līng-tsīn-hàu, tsīn-hàu-put-līng-tsīn-tiong* 盡忠不能盡孝, 盡孝不能盡忠 ‘one cannot serve the parents and practice loyalty to the emperor at the same time’ in line [13].

In addition to what we have introduced about the scenery and the **nature**, a fruit in this area that provides a convenient background for the drama and should be reported as *nāi-tsi* 荔枝 ‘Litchi’. This fruit was the essential token for Wu Niang to show her love to Chen San. Litchi (*Litchi chinensis*) is a fruit that grows in subtropical areas. It grows mainly from Jiang Xi Province of China to northern Vietnam and can be harvested between May and August. Keeping Litchi



fresh and transporting it for consumers living away from the production area requires much attention and effort. An emperor (AD 685-762) in Tang Period tried to please his imperial concubine Yang Yu-Huang and had his courtier bring Litchi over to Chang-An City (the capital at that time), which was thousands of miles away from Southern China. This became a story passed on with approval recorded in the *Anecdotal Biography of the Concubine Yang (Yáng Guì Fēi Wài Chuán 楊貴妃外傳)*.

In sum, the financial keywords ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ expressions in the lyrics did reveal culture features, from eating, clothing, even the dark side of bribery is apparent. The next section shows whether the discussed cultural features are still practiced today and gives a conclusion.

5. Concluding Remark

From the lyrics of *Li Jing Ji*, we have a historical lens to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by first presenting financial expressions in form of ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ and from these we discuss cultural messages that the drama revealed.

We can tell the story again with some cultural features emerged (the underlined parts): *Li Jing Ji* also known as *Legend of Lychee Mirror* because a

handkerchief wrapped up with a Litchi [735] by Wu Niang was dropped to Chen San as a token of her love to him [757] after they first met at the Lantern Festival [387] watching the lantern show. Chen San then disguised himself as a mirror [2501] making craftsman [1798] to serve as a slave [1452] in the rich Huang family in order to see Wu Niang. The Huang family was so rich that gold and silver decorations were everywhere in the house. Having the concept of “families of equal standing” [380], Wu Niang’s father accepted the money gift [531] presented by a matchmaker [427] hired by Lin Da, a local tycoon. Wu Niang was depressed and did not want to have rice or tea [2622]. She stayed in her room, looking out of the window. Crickets [2023] crying and the shadow of willows [2718] could be seen in the garden. Lin Da urged the Huang Family and said he would arrange sedan chairs [2103] to take Wu Niang. At their wits end, Chen San and Wu Niang took off to elope through the help of Wu Niang’s maid [2350] when the night watch sounded [2246]. They were caught. Fortunately, Chen San’s brother, who passed the imperial examination [3000], had power and released Chen San from his crime. Chen San and Wu Niang got married at the end.

Table 4. Significant cultural features revealed in Li Jing Ji and their practices nowadays

Cultural items	Cultural feature	Nowadays
Traffic		
Horse	Transportation vehicle for officials and rich people.	Not any more
Boat	Important transportation vehicle in the this area	In some areas
Sedan chair	Represent social status	Not any more
Lotus feet	A custom in China for about 1000 years	Not any more
Clothing		
Color of the clothes	Distinguish official rank as well as wealth of a family	Not any more
Housing		
Mirror	Mirror-making craftsman was a job	Not any more
Eating		
Litchi	A kind of fruit in the area	Still now
Glutinous rice balls	People will be one year older after eating the glutinous rice balls.	Still now
Rice	Main meal in the area	Still now
Tea	Popular drink	Still now



Entertainment		
The Lantern Festival	Significant festival in Chinese area.	Still now
Crickets	Crickets fighting culture	Still now
Lotus	Nice scenery in Southeast China	Still now
Embroidery	Lady's ability	In some areas
Society		
Imperial examination	A system in China for about 1500 years	Exist in a different way
Silver ingot	Currency for some time in China	Not any more
Emperor	Ruler of the country in a feudal society	Not any more
Yue Lao	A Chinese believed love god	Still now
Matchmaker	Marriage had no freedom and was made match by matchmaker	Not any more (but still plays a ritual role)
Sound the night watches	The way of time reporting at that time	Not any more

In *Li Jong Ji*, between gold and silver, silver has more frequent occurrences for denoting money than gold, for silver ingot functioned as currency at that time. However, in Southern Min nowadays uttered in Taiwan, more lexemes collocated with gold relate to money, for instance, *kià-kim-phōo-á* 寄金簿仔 ‘deposit-gold-book; passbook’, *ki-kim* 基金 ‘base-gold; capital’ and *huát-kim* 罰金 ‘punishment-gold; fine’. On the other hand, silver nowadays has less connection with money, such as *gîn-kak-á* 銀角仔 ‘silver-angle; coin’ and *gîn-hâng* 銀行 ‘silver-house; bank’. Even though in the current monetary system, gold and silver do not function as commodity money, the root meanings of lexemes ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ can facilitate language learners’ metaphorical mapping. In this sense, recognizing a root meaning from culture can accelerate a language learning task.

Table 4 lists some cultural features that we have discussed in terms of eating, clothing, housing, transportation and entertainment, including their roles in the drama, in the Chinese culture and whether they are still present today. Most of the culture items related to eating are still practiced in modern Chinese society, whereas those related to clothing and transportation faded away along with the change of the time but they can be traced in historical works such as *Li Jing Ji*. Consequently, if one is interested in a certain culture, he can read classical literature, like *Li Jing Ji*, and

experience it through religion and traditional activities. Foot binding, just like the corsetsock puppet in some western countries is no more, but high-heeled shoes are popular all over the world still today. Further, even though those scenes in the wealthy lives in *Li Jing Ji* are no longer seen nowadays, we still detect some metaphorical mapping in phrases uttered in present days. For instance, to emphasize our sincerity, we can say that we *tái jiào* 抬轎 ‘lift a sedan chair’ to invite one to an event.

The banned drama *Li Jing Ji* not only tells a forbidden love story but also reveals various Chinese cultural stories behind the scene. ‘Gold’ and ‘silver’ hint at the financial and cultural background of the drama that happened more than five hundred years ago. The fundamental metaphorical mapping of language in our conceptual systems can be traced back through cultural imprint.



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禁演戲曲《荔鏡記》中的文化呈現

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摘 要

本文探討曾在十六、十七世紀於中國禁演的戲劇《荔鏡記》，來一窺當時的社會經濟文化。我們首先用詞曲中的金融經濟關鍵字「金」和「銀」，針對它們的搭配詞和意涵進行比對後，接著從食、衣、住、行、娛樂、社會和自然等方面來重現當時的文化，最後做一今昔的社會對比。

關鍵詞：語言與文化、歌詞、戲曲、金融經濟詞彙

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