



A Preliminary Study of Chinese Brocade Names

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Abstract

A brocade is a type of heavy cloth with a raised pattern embroidered in gold or silver silk thread. Chinese brocades are famous for their long history, exquisite patterns, and weaving techniques. This study examines 160 Chinese brocade product names, 31 category names, and 24 subcategory names. The names were extracted from *A Complete Guide to Chinese Brocade* for the purpose of investigating the onomastic patterns of brocades through lexicological and semantic feature analysis. Our results show that the names of brocade categories were usually formed by at most two lexicological units, while the names of brocade products were commonly composed of three or more lexicological units. The lexicological structure of these brocade names was as follows: [pattern name + *jin* 'brocade']. Most of the brocade names investigated in this study had the following composition: [modifier(s) + the core semantic element *jin* 'brocade'], with the modifiers indicating different characteristics of the brocade. In addition to offering a presentation of these findings, this study also explores the socio-cultural implication of these brocade names from a socio-onomastic perspective. Our results show that the Chinese brocade names examined reflect the Chinese people's pursuit of a happy, wealthy, and healthy life, along with a harmonious relationship with nature and other people.

Keywords: Chinese, brocade, semantic features, lexicological features, socio-onomastics

Introduction

The origin of the Chinese word *jin* 锦 'brocade' was explained in the *Shi Ming* 释名 'Interpreting Names' by Liu Xi of the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 CE). According to this document, the Chinese character for the precious fabric is composed of *jin* 金 'gold' on the left and *bo* 帛 'silk' on the right (Zhu 1992, 72). What makes this silk fabric so valuable is not only the luxurious materials *jin* and *bo* used to craft it. As Becker (1986, 55) explains, it is also treasured for its intricate, multicolored designs.

It may come as no surprise then that the Chinese character *jin* also means 'pleasing and beautiful'. It appears, for example, in Chinese phrases such as *jinxiu-heshan* 锦绣河山 'a land of charm and beauty', *jinxiu-qiancheng* 锦绣前程 'a glorious future', *jinxin-xiukou* 锦心绣口 'elegant thought and flowery speech', and *jinyi-yushi* 锦衣玉食 'beautiful dress and good food'. Furthermore, there are many other product names in Chinese that feature the character *jin*. These include *jinzi* 锦字 'brocade script', *jinshu* 锦书 'brocade book', *jinse* 锦瑟 'brocade zither', *jinfan* 锦帆 'brocade sail', *jinjian* 锦笺 'brocade letter', *jinnang* 锦囊 'brocade purse', *jinbiao* 锦标 'brocade trophy'. In these onomastic constructions, *jin* also indicates a thing of beauty.

Where the Chinese brocade *jin* 锦 is concerned, previous studies have mainly focused on the design features, weaving technique, and/or historical and cultural elements of the fabric (e.g., Zhao 2002; Qian 2004; Cai 2004; Zhou 2007). However, with the one known exception of Chen et al. 2018 which examined the names and historical origins of Song brocades, the onomastic features of these brocades have yet to be researched. This oversight is significant.

As Hough (2016) notes in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, the culture of naming is not limited to people and places, but also extends to human-made objects. Therefore, a sociolinguistic study of object names may enrich our understanding of the local knowledge and culture of the people who made these objects (Akinnaso 1983; Khoury & Abdallah 2013; Nnamdi-Eruchalu 2018). Following this logic, a study of their names may help to enrich our knowledge of Chinese aesthetic values and ideological beliefs.

This onomastic research examines Chinese brocade names and tries to answer the following questions: What are the major naming patterns of Chinese brocade names? What are their lexicological features? What are their semantic features? What can we learn about Chinese culture and people from the semantic and lexicological features of Chinese brocade names?

Methodology

Data Source

The Chinese brocade names in this study were extracted from *A Complete Guide to Chinese Brocade*. This book introduces almost all known kinds of Chinese brocades. It was published for the purpose of the protection, preservation, and promotion of Chinese brocades worldwide. The Chinese brocade names were translated into English. The book introduces 160 product names and 31 category names. In addition, the reference divides many of the brocade categories into sub-categories. For example, the category *yunjin* 云锦 ‘cloud brocade’ has several subcategories, such as *kudian* 库缎 ‘palace brocade’, *kujin* 库金 ‘gold-woven palace brocade’, *zhijin* 织金 ‘gold-woven brocade’, and *Zhuanghua* 妆花 ‘Zhuanghua brocade’.¹ This investigation also examined 24 sub-category names. In total, 215 brocade names were extracted and analyzed for this study. This data set is displayed in Tables 1, 2, and 3 below.

Table 1: Chinese Design Names (CDNs) of Chinese Brocades with English Translations/Descriptions (ET/Ds)

No.	CDNs	ET/Ds of CDNs	No.	CDNs	ET/Ds of CDNs
1	云龙锦	Dragon in the Clouds	81	宝莲龟背纹锦	Lotus and Turtle Shell
2	芙蓉锦	Hibiscus	82	方格朵花蜀锦	Shu Flower Checkered Pattern
3	夔纹锦	Kui	83	联珠鸟兽纹锦	String of Pearls, Bird, and Beast
4	鹿纹锦	Deer	84	大云龙妆花锦	Zhuanghua Cloud and Dragon
5	菱纹锦	Water Caltrop	85	大凤莲妆花锦	Zhuanghua Phoenix and Lotus
6	矩纹锦	Rectangle	86	双色方格纹锦	Two-color Checkered Pattern
7	树纹锦	Tree	87	五福捧“寿”库缎	Palace Satin with Bats and 寿 ‘longevity’
8	云雁锦	Flying Wild Goose	88	舞动物纹锦	Dancer and Animal
9	玛瑙锦	Agate	89	几何动物纹锦	Geometric Shape and Animal
10	盘球锦	Ball-shaped	90	对鸟对兽纹锦	Double Bird and Double Beast
11	葵花锦	Sunflower	91	狮噬纹长斑锦	Lion
12	广山锦	Guangshan	92	大窠马大球锦	Horse in a Big Ring and a Big Ball
13	十样锦	Ten-category	93	球路小宝照锦	Balled Small Treasure
14	雕团锦	Groups of Vultures	94	联珠对马纹锦	String of Pearls and Double Horse
15	宜男锦	Male Offspring	95	联珠对鸭纹锦	String of Pearls and Double Duck
16	方胜锦	Overlapping-Diamond-Shaped	96	联珠对龙纹锦	String of Pearls, Double Dragon on Damask Silk
17	狮团锦	Group of Lions	97	动物几何纹锦	Animal and Geometric Shape
18	灯笼锦	Lantern	8	复丝穿花风锦	Phoenix amongst Flowers
19	天孙锦	Vega	99	蓝地八答晕锦	Eight-direction Halo Effect against Blue Background
20	象眼锦	Elephant Eye	100	龙戏珠球路锦	Dragon Playing with Beads and Ball
21	百子图锦	Hundred-offspring	101	双瑞雪花球锦	Double Snowflake and Ball
22	瑞花纹锦	Auspicious Flower	102	卷草蝴蝶纹锦	Curled Grass and Butterfly
23	对龙纹锦	Double Dragon	103	缠枝莲花纹锦	Twisting Branch and Lotus
24	唐花纹锦	Tang	104	青地八答晕锦	Eight-direction Halo Effect against Green-black Background
25	“安乐”绣锦	Anle Embroidery with 安 ‘peace’ and 乐 ‘happiness’	105	菱格四合如意锦	Diamond, Four-in-One <i>Ruyi</i>
26	鸟兽纹锦	Bird and Beast	106	鲤鱼戏水金宝地锦	Carp Playing in the Water in the Golden Treasure Land
27	“讨南羌”锦	Embroidered with 讨南羌 ‘suppressing the southern Qiang’	107	“万寿中华”妆花缎	Zhuanghua Satin Embroidered with 万寿中华 ‘Long Live China’
28	“韩仁”绣锦	Han Ren	108	和清海宴妆花缎	Zhuanghua Peaceful Nation
29	花鸟纹锦	Flower and Bird	109	对马对羊树纹锦	Double Horse, Double Goat, and Tree
30	长安竹锦	Long Peace and Bamboo	110	藏青地禽兽纹锦	Fowl and Beast against Green-black Background
31	“天下乐”锦	Embroidered with 天下乐 ‘world happiness’	111	球路联珠孔雀锦	Balled String of Pearls and Peacock
32	宝界地锦	World of Treasure	112	赤狮凤纹蜀江锦	Shu/Shujiang Red Lion and Phoenix
33	八答晕锦	Eight-direction Halo Effect	113	“登高明望四海”锦	Embroidered with 登高明望四海 ‘looking far out at the four seas after climbing up high’
34	蒲纹织锦	Cattail	114	忍冬相间团花锦	Honeysuckle and Rounded Figure
35	鹤、灯笼锦	Crane and Lantern	115	格子花纹蜀江锦	Shu Checkered Pattern
36	大狮子锦	Big Lions	116	茶地与兽卉纹锦	Beast and Flower Design against Tawny Background
37	六答晕锦	Six-direction Halo Effect	117	织金寸蟒妆花缎	Zhuanghua Golden Embroidered Little Python
38	福娃娃纹宋锦	Song Brocade with the Blessed Child Pattern	118	“天下乐”红地蒲锦	Cattail Embroidered with 天下乐 ‘world happiness’ against Red Background
39	孔雀牡丹锦	Peacock and Peony	119	十样锦的织金锦	Gold-woven Ten Category

Table 1 continued: Chinese Design Names (CDNs) of Chinese Brocades with English Translations/Descriptions (ET/Ds)

No.	CDNs	ET/Ds of CDNs	No.	CDNs	ET/Ds of CDNs
40	如意天花锦	Ruyi Scepter and Snow	120	双狮雪花球路锦	Double Lion and Snowflake
41	云龙团花锦	Flying Dragon and Rounded Figure	121	联珠孔雀“贵”字锦	String of Pearls and Peacock, Embroidered with ‘nobility’
42	龟子龙纹锦	Young Turtle and Dragon	122	绿地织金灯笼锦	Gold-woven Lantern against Green Background
43	满地小花锦	Small Flowers Blanketing the Earth	123	绿地缠枝牡丹锦	Twisted Branch and Peony against Green Background
44	龙纹格子锦	Dragon against Plaid Background	124	龙凤团花格子锦	Dragon, Phoenix, and Flower Lattice
45	方格兽纹锦	Animal against Checkered Background	125	银褐地落花流水绫	Falling Flowers and Flowing Waters against Silver-brown Background
46	龙凤条纹锦	Dragon and Phoenix against Striped Background	126	海蓝地宝相花纹锦	Baoxiang Flower against Aquamarine Background
47	“长乐明光”锦	Embroidered with 长乐明光 ‘endless happiness and bright light’	127	狮子七宝唐花纹锦	Tang Lion and Seven-treasure
48	“万年益寿”锦	Embroidered with 万年益寿 ‘endless longevity’	128	联珠花树对鹿纹锦	String of Pearls, Flowers, Trees, and Double Deer
49	“万事如意”锦	Embroidered with 万事如意 ‘May everything go very well, just as one wishes’	129	连璧国狮子猎纹锦	Lianbi Kingdom Hunting Lion
50	茱萸回纹锦	Cornel Fret	130	绿地缠枝莲妆花锦	Zhuanghua Embroidered Lotus
51	绛地蛟龙锦	Flood Dragon against Purple-red Background	131	绿地龙博古妆花锦	Zhuanghua Dragon against Green Background
52	“长寿明光”锦	Embroidered with 长寿明光 ‘longevity and bright light’	132	黄地八答晕加金锦	Golden Eight-direction Halo Effect against Yellow Background
53	绀地勾纹锦	Hook against Purple Background	133	青地八答晕加金锦	Golden Eight-direction Halo Effect against Green-black Background
54	盘球胡王锦	Ball-shaped King of Hu	134	绿地“富贵平安”花缎	Embroidered with 富贵平安 ‘wealth and peace’ against Green Background
55	盘球狮象锦	Ball-shaped Lion and Elephant	135	几何八宝纹晕织锦	Geometric Shape and Eight Treasure Halo Effect
56	方胜兽纹锦	Overlapping-Diamond-shaped Beast Pattern	136	红地万年青织金锦	Gold and Evergreen against Red Background
57	联珠胡王锦	King of Hu String of Pearls	137	云纹穿枝牡丹纹锦	Cloud Pattern, Branches, and Peony
58	联珠鹿纹锦	String of Pearls and Deer	138	湖色地正“卍”字织金缎	Gold-woven Satin with 卍 Embroidered against Light Green Background
59	鸟衔瑞花锦	Bird holding Auspicious Flower in its Beak	139	蓝地长圆“寿”织金库缎	Gold-woven Palace Satin with 寿 ‘longevity’ against Blue Background
60	晕绸提花锦	Halo Effect against Jacquard Background	140	牛郎织女织金妆花缎	Zhuanghua Gold-woven Cowherd and the Girl Weaver
61	联珠对鸡锦	String of Pearls and Double Rooster	141	绛地“喜”字并蒂莲锦	Two Lotuses with 喜 ‘happiness’ against a Crimson Background
62	宝相花纹锦	Baoxiang Flower	142	“五星出东方利中国”锦	embroidered with 五星出东方利中国 ‘five stars rise in the east and benefit the Central Kingdom’
63	益州新样锦	Yizhou New Design	143	绿地龟背龙纹加金锦	Golden Turtle Shell and Dragon against Green Background
64	穿花凤纹锦	Phoenix amongst Flowers	144	八宝吉祥纹方方蜀锦	Fangfang Shu Auspicious Eight-treasure
65	球路斗羊锦	Balled Fighting Goat	145	红地牡丹纹织金库锦	Gold-woven Peony against Red Background
66	四答晕盆锦	Four-direction Halo Effect Basin	146	满地红孔雀羽团花锦	Peacock Feathers and Rounded Figure against Red Background
67	太子绵羊锦	Crown Prince and Sheep	147	“延年益寿大宜子孙”锦	Embroidered with 延年益寿大宜子孙 ‘prolonging life for descendants’ wellbeing’
68	蝴蝶团花锦	Butterfly and Rounded Figure	148	黄曲水纹地串枝菊花锦	Chrysanthemum with Yellow Waves
69	铁梗缠荷锦	Chinese Lotus	149	南无观音菩萨金宝地	Namo Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva’s Golden Treasure Land
70	花样盘球锦	Ball-shaped Flower Pattern	150	红地方圆格翔鹤灯笼锦	Square, Flying Crane, and Lantern against Red Background
71	“天下乐”大锦	Embroidered 天下乐 ‘world happiness’	151	红地“万事如意”八答晕锦	Eight-direction Halo Effect embroidered with 万事如意 ‘May everything go well, just as one wishes with no obstacles’ against a Red Background
72	落花流水锦	Falling Flowers and Running Water	152	墨地织金灵芝鹤寿妆花缎	Zhuanghua Golden Silk Embroidered Fungi, Crane, and Longevity
73	宜男百花锦	Male Offspring and a Hundred Flowers	153	绿地八则织金多彩夔龙锦	Eight Dragons against Dark Green Background

Table 1 continued: Chinese Design Names (CDNs) of Chinese Brocades with English Translations/Descriptions (ET/Ds)

No.	CDNs	ET/Ds of CDNs	No.	CDNs	ET/Ds of CDNs
74	如意牡丹锦	<i>Ruyi</i> Scepter and Peony	154	红地织金吉庆双鱼 妆花锦	Zhuanghua Golden Embroidered Double Fish against Red Background
75	橙四金雕锦	Four Gold Vultures	155	蓝地织金大叶牡丹 妆花缎	Zhuanghua Golden Embroidered Large-leaf Peony against Blue Background
76	翠池狮子锦	Emerald Lion	156	蓝地长寿串枝花纹 织金缎	Embroidered with 寿 'longevity' and Interlaced Flower Pattern against Blue Background
77	大窠狮子锦	Lion in a Big Ring	157	蓝地织金宝相花纹 纳石失	Nasich Golden Embroidered Baoxiang flower against Blue Background
78	大窠驼球锦	Camel in a Big Ring	158	蓝地牡丹莲花纹织 金妆花锦	Zhuanghua Golden Embroidered Peony and Lotus against Blue Background
79	双窠云雁锦	Flying Wild Goose in Double Rings	159	“王侯合婚千秋万岁 宜子孙”锦	Embroidered with 王侯合婚千秋万岁宜子孙 'May a noble marriage benefit your offspring for countless generations'
80	变形蝴蝶锦	Twisted Butterfly	160	蓝地至善大慈法王 大圆通佛唐卡	Buddha Thangka of the Compassionate and Merciful Prince of Dharma, "Dayuantong", against a Blue Background

Table 2: Category Names of Chinese Brocades by Official Name and Naming Feature (NF)

Names				Names			
No.	Chinese	English	NF	No.	Chinese	English	NF
1	缘条	silk braid	form	17	藏锦	Tibetan brocade	minority group
2	绑丝	Kesi ¹	craftsmanship	18	阿昌锦	Achang brocade	minority group
3	蜀锦 / 蜀江 锦	Shu brocade	place	19	布衣锦	Buyei brocade	minority group
4	鲁锦	Lu brocade	place	20	毛南锦	Maonan brocade	minority group
5	荆锦 / 江陵 锦	Jing brocade	place	21	景颇锦	Jingpo brocade	minority group
6	宋锦	Song brocade	dynasty	22	粟粟锦	Lisu brocade	minority group
7	云锦	cloud brocade	pattern	23	土家锦	Tujia brocade	minority group
8	壮锦	Zhuang brocade	minority group	24	得昂锦	De'ang brocade	minority group
9	苗锦	Miao brocade	minority group	25	独龙锦	Derung brocade	minority group
10	黎锦	Li brocade	minority group	26	普米锦	Pumi brocade	minority group
11	瑶锦	Yao brocade	minority group	27	基诺锦	Jinuo brocade	minority group
12	侗锦	Dong brocade	minority group	28	拉祜锦	Lahu brocade	minority group
13	傣锦	Dai brocade	minority group	29	高山锦	Gaoshan brocade	minority group
14	佤锦	Wa brocade	minority group	30	纳西锦	Naxi brocade	minority group
15	怒锦	Nu brocade	minority group	31	水族织锦	Shui tissue brocade	minority group
16	羌锦	Qiang brocade	minority group				

Table 3: Sub-category Names of Chinese Brocades by Official Name and Category

No.	Names		Category	No.	Names		Category
	Chinese	English			Chinese	English	
1	彩锦	colorful brocade	Shu	13	妆花锦	Zhuanghua brocade	cloud
2	方方锦	Fangfang brocade	Shu	14	库金锦	gold-woven palace	cloud
3	雨丝锦	fine rain brocade	Shu	15	库缎锦	palace brocade	cloud
4	浣花锦	Huanhua brocade	Shu	16	织金锦	gold-woven	cloud
5	月华锦	moonlight brocade	Shu	17	纳石失	Nasich (Mongolian golden weave) brocade	cloud
6	铭文锦	inscription-patterned brocade	Shu, cloud, etc.	18	匹料锦	material brocade	cloud
7	重锦/大锦	double brocade /big brocade	Song	19	氇氇	Pulu (Tibet wool) brocade	Tibetan
8	匣锦	box brocade	Song	20	邦典	Bangdian (Tibetan apron) brocade	Tibetan
9	细锦/合锦	fine brocade /silk brocade	Song	21	素锦	plain brocade	Dong, Miao
10	小锦	small	Song	22	绣锦	embroidered brocade	Zhuang
11	袱子锦	hierarchical brocade	Song	23	八宝被	eight-treasure quilt of Yao brocade	Yao
12	晕色锦	iridescent brocade	Song	24	西兰卡普	Xilankapu (Tujia bedding) brocade	Tujia

Analysis

For this study, two methods of analysis were used. The first analytical method was lexicological. Using this analytical approach, the lexicological structure of the brocade names was examined to determine which formal linguistic structures were the most common. The number of lexicological units in each name was counted according to *Contemporary Chinese Language Word Segmentation Specification for Information Processing* (Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics 1992). Table 4 provides examples of brocade names of varying lengths and differing numbers of lexicological units (LU) and onomastic units.

Table 4: Brocade Names of Different Lexicological Units (LU) and Onomastic Units

No. of LU	Chinese Character(s)	Onomastic Units	Description
One	[缣丝]	<i>Kesi</i> 'silk tapestry'	A lightweight tapestry celebrated for its clarity of pattern
Two	[鲁] + [锦]	[Lu]+[Jin]	Lu brocade which is the style of the Shandong Province
Three	[孔雀] + [牡丹] + [锦]	[Kongque 'peacock']+[Mudan 'peony']+[Jin 'brocade']	A brocade with a peacock and peony pattern
Four	[联珠]+[鸟]+[兽纹]+[锦]	[Lianzhu 'string of pearls']+[Niao 'bird']+[Shouwen 'beast'] + [Jin 'brocade']	A brocade with a design featuring a string of pearls, a bird, and a beast.
Five	[龙]+[凤]+[团花]+[格子]+[锦]	[Long 'dragon'] + [Feng 'phoenix']+[Tuanhua 'a round figure']+[Gezi 'a checkered pattern']+[Jin 'brocade']	A brocade design composed of a dragon, phoenix, a round figure, and a checkered pattern

It is important to point out that some brocade names contain inscriptions of Chinese characters with auspicious meanings woven into the brocade. In figure 1 below, the brocade inscription *Wuxing Chu Dongfang Li Zhongguo* 五星出东方利中国 'Five Stars Rise in the East and Benefit the Central Kingdom' is shown.



Figure 1: The “Five Stars Rise in the East and Benefit the Central Kingdom” brocade (Han Jin. No. 8 Tomb at the Niya ruins, unearthed in Xinjiang. Collection of the Institute of Archeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Xinjiang.)

On the above brocade, the red rectangle marks the area around the inscription “Five Stars Rise in the East and Benefit the Central Kingdom” which contains eight Chinese characters. Theoretically, these characters can be broken up into multiple lexicological units. However, when such inscriptions are used in the brocade names, they are taken as a whole and counted as a single lexicological unit. So, the above inscribed brocade name is formed by two lexical units: [‘Five Stars Rise in the East and Benefit the Central Kingdom’] + [‘brocade’]. This enumeration practice was followed in the lexicological analyses performed for this investigation.

The second analytical method used for this study was semantic feature analysis. Rooted in the component analysis studies of Trubetzky and the Prague School of Linguistics (Hatch & Brown 1995), this method helped us to separate the meanings of the words, and analyze the relationships between similar words. Using the onomastic technique of dividing names components into different semantic groupings (Sjöblom 2016), this study divided the Chinese brocade names into different semantic units. For example, the name *Kongque Mudan Jin* 孔雀牡丹锦 ‘Brocade with a Peacock and Peony Pattern’ was divided into the core semantic element [*Jin* 锦 ‘brocade’] and the modifiers [*Kongque* 孔雀 ‘Peacock’] and [*Mudan* 牡丹 ‘Peony’]. As will be shown, the brocade name modifiers cover a wide range of topics. These include the motif, pattern, weave structure, color, composition, artistic style, and so on. Some names in the data set contained multiple modifiers such as motif + pattern + subcategory; inscription + pattern; and motif + subcategory. For the sake of simplicity, however, such compound modifiers were counted only once and categorized according to the first semantic feature. For example, motif + subcategory was classified as ‘motif’.

Finally, to contextualize the results found in examination of the brocade names data set, a comparative set of analyses was conducted using authentic Chinese texts. This corpus of texts was first compiled by Chenglin Bian and contains 50,000 Chinese words commonly used from 1989 to 1999. The texts represent a variety of domains such as news reporting, politics, economy, industry, agriculture, trade, science and technology, military, diplomacy, education, health care, and environment protection (Bian 2000).

Results

Table 4 presents the results of the lexicological analyses which divided and tabulated the number of lexicological units contained in the brocade product and category names.

Table 5: The Frequency and Percentage of Brocade Product and Category Names by Lexicological Unit

No. of Units	Brocade Name Type					
	Product		(Sub-)Category		Row Totals	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
One	0	0.00	6	10.90	6	2.79
Two	44	27.50	49	89.10	93	43.26
Three	61	38.13			61	28.37
Four	38	23.75			38	17.67
Five or more	17	10.62			17	7.91
Totals	160	100.00	55	100.00	215	100.00

In table 5, Chinese brocade names of one, two, and three lexicological units amounts to 74.42%. Interestingly, as shown in table 6, these results contrast sharply with the distribution of lexicological units identified in the authentic Chinese text corpus compiled by Bian (2000).

Table 6: A Comparison of Brocade Names and Authentic Chinese Texts

No. of Units	Brocade Product and (Sub-)category Names		Chinese Texts	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
One	6	2.79	770	17.07
Two	93	43.26	3,143	69.67
Three	61	28.37	371	8.28.22
Four	38	17.67	197	4.37
Five or More	17	7.91	30	0.67
Totals	215	100.00	4,511	100.00

A comparison of the brocade names and authentic Chinese texts shows that brocade names are longer. A Chi-square test revealed a statistically significant difference in number of lexicological units ($X^2 = 318.841$, $p < 0.001$). Chinese brocade names are longer mainly because they are unusually descriptive and are composed of one or more modifiers followed by *jin* 'brocade'. An exception to this finding is category names named after a minority group. These names remain short since an abbreviation is commonly used to refer to the minority group. For example, *Miao brocade* refers to the traditional brocade of the Miao. The name *Miao* is an abbreviation of the proper noun *Miaozu* which is a Chinese cover term for several groups of people who live in Southern borderlands of China. These groups are linked together by a common linguistic and cultural heritage. Other examples of brocade names contain the abbreviated names of minority groups are the *Li Brocade*, *Yao Brocade*, *Dong Brocade*, and *Dai Brocade* for the Li, Dong, and Dai peoples. The brocade names named after a region show similar patterns and feature the abbreviated form of the regional names. For example, *Shujin* 蜀锦 'Shu Brocade' uses *Shu*, the abbreviation for Sichuan Province. Similarly, *Jingjin* 荆锦 'Jing Brocade' uses *Jing* 荆, the abbreviation for Jingzhou City of Hubei Province.

Alongside the minority group whose tradition is represented in the piece and the region of origin, the brocade names identify a wide range of characteristics about the fabric design including the production technique, weave structure, color, composition, artistic style, cultural significance, etc.. Table 7 presents the results of our semantic analyses of these features.

Table 7: Semantic Features Identified in the Chinese Brocade Names by Frequency and Percentage

Semantic Features	Frequency	%
Pattern	134	62.32
Minority Group	24	11.16
Inscription	21	9.77
Craftsmanship	9	4.18
Motif	7	3.25
Function	6	2.79
Region	4	1.86
Color	3	1.39
Storehouse	2	0.93
Form	1	0.47
Dynasty	1	0.47
Material	1	0.47
Technique	1	0.47
Size	1	0.47
Total	215	100

As shown above in table 7, the brocade name modifiers cover a wide range of topics. Importantly, while the (sub-)category brocade names investigated are mainly formed by one or two modifiers plus the center word, the brocade product names are more commonly formed by three or more modifiers plus the center word.

Examining the semantic meanings of the brocade name components shows that most Chinese brocades examined have the onomastic pattern of [modifier] + [core semantic element].² Among the 215 Chinese brocade names, 185 (86.05%) have the word *jin* as the core semantic element. The remaining 30 (13.95%) brocade names have the name of a subcategory as the core semantic element, for example, in *Lüdi Zhijin Denglong Jin* 绿地织金灯笼锦 ‘Gold-Woven Brocade of the Lantern Design over Green Ground’, *zhijin* 织金 ‘gold-woven brocade’ is a subcategory of *yunjin* ‘cloud brocade’.

As we can also see in table 7 above, the most commonly occurring naming method is naming after a pattern that is used for the embroidery. The frequent use of this semantic feature most likely occurs because pattern names can indirectly express the techniques and design motifs used when making the brocade. They also directly connect the fabrics to referential objects. For example, *yunjin* 云锦 ‘cloud brocade’ has a cloud pattern. Names based on patterns refer to animals, plants, geometric patterns, or Chinese characters displayed.

The second most commonly-occurring namesake in the dataset are minority groups. There are 56 official minority groups in China. Of these, 25 groups have brocades named after them. Naming brocades after a minority group can be regarded as identity construction of these groups in the context of the larger multicultural society of China (Woodman 2022). Take as an example *Dai brocade* which is named after the Dai minority group. The brocade plays a central role in the identity of the Dai. They use patterns mostly based on objects that occur in nature and that represent the essence of life. Over the centuries, Dai brocade has evolved and expanded to form new cultural forms and artistic effects (Cheng et al. 2020). *Zhuang brocade* is another example. It is also closely linked with the folk culture and the festival activities of the Zhuang people (Ma 2017).³

The third most commonly occurring naming feature is an inscription. Usually, the inscription on a Chinese brocade is in the form of calligraphic brush strokes which produce two to eight Chinese characters taken from stone or metal carvings. The inscribed words are added into the gaps in the embroidery patterns of this brocade style (Liu et al. 2012). Combining various inscriptions with a brocade weaving pattern was particularly popular from the West Han Dynasty to the Wei and Jin Dynasties (BCE 206–CE 420) (Liu et al. 2012). Even today, this style remains somewhat popular, and the inscribed sayings are often used in contemporary salutations and other social discourse.

Finally, the fourth most commonly-occurring naming method comprises brocades named craftsmanship technique (e.g., *chongjin* 重锦 ‘double brocade’, *xiujin* 绣锦 ‘embroidered brocade’, and *xijin* 细锦 ‘fine brocade’). Less common naming patterns that were attested in the dataset include *Songjin* 宋锦 ‘Song Brocade’, named after the Song Dynasty; *Taotiao* 绦条 ‘Silk Braids’, named after a braided hair style; *Xiaojin* 小锦 ‘Small Brocade’, so named because of its size; and *Pulu* 氍毹 ‘Tibet Wool’, named after the material used.

Discussion: Socio-Cultural Significance of Chinese Brocade Names

A central characteristic of Chinese brocade naming culture is that the brocade names reflect aesthetic values of the people with whom they are associated. This characteristic is also seen in Chinese personal naming culture. As Xu et al. (2020) write, Chinese birth names are chosen because they reflect ideals, ambitions, aesthetic values, and ideological beliefs of Chinese people. The same seems to be true in the naming of Chinese brocades: the Chinese appear prefer to use words with auspicious cultural implications such as longevity, harmonious relationships, wealth, and fortune.

Along with these national insights pattern, the brocade names also reveal important socio-cultural characteristics about the various minority groups in China. The Han people use brocade patterns that feature mountains and clouds, auspicious animals, and positive inscriptions. According to the findings of this study, the names of Han brocades reflect this tradition (e.g., the brocade with the double dragon design; and the brocade with the flower and bird design). These findings are mirrored by research by Huang (2015), who made the following observation about brocades produced by the Jingpo people of China.

Jingpo people believe that everything in the world has the duality of nature and ‘spirit’, and the soul is immortal. Each pattern of *Jingpo Jin* 景颇锦 ‘Jingpo Brocade’ contains moral meanings: animals, plants, the sun and stars, the belief and culture of primitive religion, myth and legend, and a long narrative poem (143).

Similar findings for other minority groups in China have been reported by other researchers (Cai 2004; Zhou 2007; Ma 2017). What these groups share is the tradition of weaving auspicious real and mythological plants and animals into their brocades and the names they use to refer to these luxurious fabrics. By examining the names of these Chinese brocades, it is even possible to reveal a chain of signification where specific referents

communicate socio-cultural meanings (Nuessel 2018). Many Chinese brocade names in China combine more than one animal or plant to increase the impact of the symbolism. For example, the lion pattern is combined with the elephant in the Chinese brocade named *Brocade of the Coiled Ball Lion and Elephant Design*. The Chinese brocade name *Guizi Longwen Jin* 龟子龙纹锦 ‘brocade with the Young Turtle and Dragon Design’ also contains several culturally significant referents. In this name, *guizi* 龟子 ‘young turtle’ stands for longevity in Chinese culture, while *long* 龙 ‘dragon’ indicates power. Taken together the fabric and the name imply that the brocade will bring longevity and power.

Finally, Chinese brocades also use auspicious Chinese characters in their names. According to Liu et al. (2012), the language used in brocade names can be roughly divided into three categories: (1) praying for longevity and grandchildren; (2) praying for blessings and immortality; and (3) historical and political events. Two examples of the first category are *yannian yishou da yi zisun* 延年益寿大宜子孙 ‘prolonging life for descendants’ goodness’ and *wanghou hehun qianqiu wansui yi zisun* 王侯合婚千秋万岁宜子孙 ‘noble marriage benefits offspring for countless generations’. The use of these Chinese characters as brocade names illustrates the cultural value placed upon longevity, family prosperity, and happiness in Chinese culture.

Summary and Conclusion

This research studied 215 Chinese brocade product and category names extracted from the book *A Complete Guide to Chinese Brocade*. The names were examined from an onomastic perspective through lexicological and semantic analysis. Our findings show that among the most common inspirations for the naming method of Chinese brocades were fabric patterns, minority groups, and craftsmanship. The names of brocade products investigated were formed by combining lexicological units. While category names tended to be composed of only one or two lexicological units, the standard structure was found to be a composite of one or more modifier(s) + central word.

The socio-cultural significance of the Chinese brocade names varies greatly. However, two major themes were identified. The first was the Chinese people’s pursuit of a happy, wealthy, and healthy life. The second was the importance of being in harmony with nature and other people. Despite these important findings, this study was not without limitations.

The number of Chinese brocade names studied in this research was limited. A future study would ideally be based on a bigger corpus of brocade names. One way to expand this area of research would be to compare Chinese brocade names with those found in Japanese and Korean cultures. The similarities and differences of the naming patterns in these different languages and cultures should lead to more insights into how people name objects. Moreover, such comparative work would help shed more light on Asian naming patterns.

Similar to the Chinese brocade naming tradition, Korean brocades are mainly named after the material, color, and pattern such as ‘lampas’ and ‘Jik-geum’ (Sim, 2015). In much the same way, the naming of Japanese brocades emphasizes the specific styles, patterns, colors, and techniques used such as thousand-bird pattern, fan style, and purple chrysanthemum (Liu et al., 2022: 122). According to Reitz (1920), Japanese brocades are divided into three main groups: (1) the *Nishiki*, or ‘colored brocade’; (2) the *Kinran*, or ‘golden strip pattern’; and (3) the *Kara ori* or ‘Chinese woven brocade’. The name of the last group shows the influence of Chinese brocade culture on Japanese brocades.

Despite these similarities, there are also intriguing differences between these nations. As presented in this article, many Chinese brocade names are based on region and minority group names, such as *Shu brocade*, *Lu brocade*, and *Jing brocade*. Though there are brocades named after regions or minority groups in other Asian countries such as the ‘southern Satsuma brocade’ in Japan and the ‘Po Chang jin’ in South Korea, regional and ethnic variation may not play as great a role in brocade naming as is the case in China. This hypothesis would have to be empirically tested however. Given the fact that Japan, Korea, and China all share a rich history of brocade artistry, the exploration of the potential socio-cultural similarities and differences by comparing their respective naming trends would be a fruitful avenue of research. This article is then one of what we hope will be many future studies.

Notes

¹ We are indebted to a reviewer for bringing to our attention the issue of capitalization. Based on our intuition, we decided to capitalize the translations of the Chinese brocade names used in this manuscript as follows. We choose to identify brocades names as proper nouns, and we capitalized their names using title case. On the other hand, we feel that category and subcategory names are common nouns. Consequently, we only capitalized words in the names of categories and subcategories that are names of minority groups (and therefore proper nouns). An analysis of word length suggests that brocade product names and brocade category names should be treated differently.

² We impressionistically compared the semantic meanings of the components in brocade product names with the semantic meanings of the components in the category names, and were unable to find a notable difference between the names types. Consequently, the semantic features of all the brocade names are collectively discussed in this paper.

³ The brocade designs of these and other Chinese minorities reflect the traditions and everyday life of these groups. At the same time, they share some features with national Chinese brocades such as the *Shu*, *Song*, and *yunjin* brocades. For example, you can clearly see the influence of Chinese national culture on the patterns of Li brocade, especially the dragon quilt (Lin and Wei 2004, 45). The dragon was regarded as a symbol of imperial power and auspiciousness in feudal China. In Chinese mythology, dragons can control the weather and bring rain during dry periods for a bountiful harvest. The dragon is often woven into the Li brocade as an expression of the Li people's yearning for a better life.

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