



Lucky Money in Red Envelopes For Chinese New Year

During the Chinese New Year, young people who greet their elders with a happy and abundant new year are handed lucky red envelopes by the elders. These envelopes are really good luck for a youngster because these have money inside. The lucky red envelopes are called "hong bao" in Mandarin, or "lai see" in Cantonese.

Symbolism of the Lucky Envelope

Giving money during Chinese New Year is considered lucky for both the giver and the receiver. Those who give will also invite the flow of money in during the entire year. Giving these envelopes also symbolize that the family luck is also passed on to the children and the unmarried teens/ adults.

Red as usual is the luckiest color, as it symbolizes life, so it's appropriate that Chinese New Year items are colored red. Hong paos have assorted designs, such as that of happy children, Chinese characters for abundance and greetings, animals of the zodiac, etc. The Chinese word for red ("hong") also sound like "plenty". Thus it is believed that money wrapped in red will make money multiply.

The money inside the hong bao is called Ya Sui Qian. Ya mean suppress; Sui sounds somehow like evil spirit. Qian means money. Therefore, Ya Sui Qian means money that can suppress evil spirits. It is believed that this lucky money can also help kids be safe and healthy for the year.

Giving the Hong Bao/ Lai See

Money in even amounts, except for 4, is considered lucky. 4 is not a good amount to put into the lucky envelopes because the Chinese word for "four" sounds similar to the sound of "death". A good way to gauge the amount to put into a hong bao is roughly the same amount as a candy bar. An adult can give 1 envelope, while married couples usually give 2 envelopes. It is said that in some parts of China, only mothers give away the hong bao.

The young people accept these lucky envelopes graciously on [Chinese New Year](#) with a sincere thank you (that's "xie xie" in Mandarin or "doi jeh" in Cantonese.) They often give thanks while kneel-bowing 3 times.

For good manners sake, the hong bao should not be opened in the presence of the giver. The receiver may only do so after leaving the giver.

The lucky money inside the hong bao is recommended to be kept and not spent immediately. Young people are encouraged to save their money. And besides, it is believed that this money brings luck and wellness so might as well keep it.

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