Internationally known as “Jasmine,” the song “molihua” was an East-China folksong of humble beginnings. Like many regional folksongs in China whose origins were mostly unknown, “molihua” exists throughout the region in numerous versions. The “molihua” that most people know today was first noticed by British diplomat George MaCartney and later presented by John Barrow in his book *Travel in China* in late 18th century. It was only in 1929 when Puccini incorporated it in his opera “Turandot” that it was catapulted onto the world stage. Since then, “molihua” has emerged as the best known Chinese musical and cultural icon in China and abroad. This paper traces the history of “molihua” and describes the different ways that it has been utilized. I argue that the shifting meaning of “molihua” is predicated on what “molihua” represents against cultural expectation, imagination and the ever-changing economic and political terrain of modern China.