

# The Leisure Lifestyle in Chengdu of the Song Dynasty

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**ABSTRACT.** *It is the important period of development in Chinese history of Sichuan in Song Dynasty .Life and culture in Chengdu are increasingly prosper which has great influence on the later development of Chengdu. The purpose of this article is to start writing from the development of the economy and society of Chengdu in Song Dynasty, to explore the leisure lifestyle, methods and characteristics of Chengdu in Song Dynasty in Sichuan, and then to analyze the function and influence of the social activities in Chengdu, Sichuan by the leisure lifestyle which will offer the reference value for the culture in Chengdu, reflecting the historical function of “governing history and enriching politics” which will boost and developing the culture of Chengdu in Sichuan province.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Song dynasty; Chengdu; Leisure; Lifestyle*

## 1. Introduction

With a history of 3,200 years, Chengdu is a veritable cultural city. It has always been known for its leisure and food, attracting more and more friends at home and abroad. It has been rated as the best tourist city in China and an excellent tourist destination in the world. Chengdu's leisure lifestyle dates back to the Tang Dynasty, and it flourished in the Song Dynasty. It has a historical imprint on the leisure life of Chengdu today and it is worthwhile for us to study. This article will analyse the economic development of Chengdu in the Song Dynasty and all aspects of its social life, such as the regional environment, transportation, politics and economy of Chengdu in the Song Dynasty.

## 2. The Social and Economic Foundation of Chengdu's Leisure Lifestyle in the Song Dynasty

### 2.1 Chengdu's Leisure Life is Based on a Unique Regional Environment

According to ‘Tai Ping Huan Yu Ji’ Yuan Feng Jiu Yu Zhi’ and ‘Song History of Song’ and other records, the jurisdictions of Chengdu in the Song Dynasty included

the southeast of Chengdu City and the surrounding areas of Chengdu[1],including Shuangliu District, Pidu District, Wenjiang District, Dujiangyan, Chongzhou, Pengzhou, etc.These places were flat and open. As far as the regional environment of the Chengdu Plain is concerned, it has never been cold in winter,seldom hot in summer,and surrounded by different mountains,and far away from the war-torn Central Plains, which provides a powerful condition for Chengdu's economic development. During the Warring States Period, Li Bing presided over the construction of the Dujiangyan Water Conservancy Project, which also laid a solid foundation for the Chengdu Plain to become a land of abundance.

### ***2.2 Chengdu's Leisure Life Benefits from the Development of Sichuan's Transportation***

In the early years of the Song Dynasty, Chengdu established Chengdu Prefecture and became one of the economic centers of that time. Sichuan in the Song Dynasty was a golden age in the history of Sichuan[2]. The development of the economy is of course inseparable from the convenience of transportation. The convenient transportation of waterways and land laid the foundation for the economic development of the Song Dynasty. The land transportation in Sichuan has been continuously developed and has been greatly improved in the Song Dynasty. There are many land routes in Sichuan in the Song Dynasty. Sichuan's waterways mainly rely on rivers such as the Min River, the Yangtzi River, the Jialing River and the Tuo River. The economy of Chengdu is mainly dependent on the Ming River. Chengdu's rich materials were transported by these waterways and land routes to various places to promote the economic development of Chengdu.

### ***2.3 Chengdu's Leisure Life Benefits from the Stability of Sichuan's Political Situation***

Chengdu in the Song Dynasty was the border area of the southwest. The emperor of Song Dynasty just like Taizong,Zhenzong and Renzong adopted effective measures to stabilize the political situation in Chengdu. In addition, because Chengdu is located in the central and western Sichuan Basin, far away from the central government, it is less affected by the war. Chengdu relies on the advantages of Sichuan since ancient times and the stable political policies formed by appropriate policies to lay a good foundation for Chengdu to become a place of leisure.

### ***2.4 Chengdu's Leisure Life Benefits from the Social and Economic Development of Chengdu***

Chengdu was economically prosperous during the Tang Dynasty, Chengdu and Yangzhou were known as “Yang Yi Yi Er”. In the Song Dynasty, the economy continued to develop, which provided good economic conditions for the leisure life of Chengdu. For example, the development of Chengdu's agriculture in the Song Dynasty, the rectification of farmland and the rectification of water conservancy

during Five Dynasty and Song Dynastiey laid a good foundation for agricultural production in the Song Dynasty.It is recorded in “The History of Song Dynasty” [3] that there are multiple crops of rice, wheat and millet in Chengdu Plain, so that the land can be fully utilized in Chengdu, where population density is high, and the grain output can be greatly increased. Another example is the development of Chengdu handicraft industry. Regarding the handicraft industry, it is worthwhile for us to mention the printing industry. Sichuan was an important printing center in the Tang Dynasty. In the Song Dynasty, the printing level was even higher, and Meishan became one of the printing industry centers.

### ***2.5 The Leisure Life in Chengdu Benefits from the Cultural Prosperity of Chengdu and the Exchange of Refined Scholars***

The development and prosperity of Chengdu's economy in the Song Dynasty attracted many literati and officialdom and their literary works played a very important role in promoting the culture of Chengdu. The most influential is Fan Chengda and Lu You, who left home and took up government employments in Chengdu. Fan Chengda's poems are mainly based on Chengdu's customs. His chapter always spread on the same day by a million women.[4] So it is because they chant, and then read by refined scholars and citizens that Chengdu's prosperity and leisure are growing.

### ***2.6 The Leisure Life in Chengdu Benefits from the Emergence of a Large Number of Idlers in Chengdu.***

The society in the Song Dynasty was stable and the economy developed rapidly. Some scholars have estimated the population density of the Chengdu Plain in the Song Dynasty[5].Although the estimation results can not fully reflect the situation at that time, but can roughly reflect the population density of the Chengdu area in the Song Dynasty. At that time, the density of Chengdu, Shuzhou and Pengzhou was relatively high. It reached 230 people/square kilometres between the third year of Yuanfeng (In 1080) and the first year of Chongning (In 1120), and it was 330 people/square kilometres in the sixteen year of Jiading(In 1223).As the population grows, there are no more spare fields for farming. Without land to make a living, people have to find another way out, so they have formed a group of “leisure people”. These “leisure people” are not social producers but are dependents. This is a special product of the city after the development of the commodity economy in the Song Dynasty.

## **3. The Overall Content and Presentation of Leisure Lifestyle in Chengdu in the Song Dynasty**

### ***3.1 You Jiang***

In fact, Chengdu had the custom of Youjiang as early as the end of the Tang

Dynasty. In the Song Dynasty, Youjiang experienced an unprecedented development. The activities of Youjiang in the Song Dynasty were divided into Xiaoyoujiang and Dayoujiang. Speaking of Xiaoyoujiang and Dayoujiang, they were both recorded in 'Sui Hua Ji Li Pu'<sup>[6]</sup>. Xiaoyoujiang was held on February 2nd, and the venue started from Wanli Bridge to Baoli Temple. There were dozens of colorful lanterns on the boat. It is a lively scene. Regarding Dayoujiang, in the Five Dynasties and Song Dynasty, the most grand event in Chengdu is the Dayoujiang which was held on April 19th according to the lunar calendar. The place of Dayoujiang started from the Zuo Bridge to the Fan'an Temple. The purpose was mainly to visit a lady called Huanhua.

### ***3.2 Night Market***

The prosperous business of the Song Dynasty promoted the night market, which greatly enriched people's lives. In the early of Song Dynasty, the night market was granted permission from the imperial court. 'Song hui yao ji gao' records, Zhaokuangyin has ordered: "The opening time of the Capital of Song Dynasty (Kaifeng) could be prolonged to One o'clock in the morning"[7]. With the support of the imperial court, the night market in the Song Dynasty developed rapidly. The market of other cities such as the Dongjing and Lin'an are full of prosperous. Influenced by the national cities, Chengdu's night market is also prosperous. There are many poems about the night market in Chengdu, and the scene of the night market in Jinjiang area was documented in 'Chengdu Zhi', [8] It is not difficult to find out from the poems that the Chengdu night market in the Song Dynasty was opened in Daci Temple and Jinjiang, and the trading hours were long, and the scene was spectacular.

### ***3.3 Garden Tour***

Due to the superior natural conditions of Chengdu, the climate is mild, the rainfall is abundant, and the rivers are numerous, creating conditions for the greening and gardening of Chengdu. The picturesque garden landscape is not only a place for literati and citizens to visit. In the summer, it has become a quiet summer resort. It can be seen from the poems of the Song Dynasty that many of these gardens are fascinating. Such as the poetry called "Kaixi Garden" which was written by Tiankuang<sup>[9]</sup>. The poetry reproduces the ancient and famous trees in the garden at that time, and the exotic flowers provide a good place for the literati and females to enjoy the amusement.

### ***3.4 Mountaineering Tour***

Due to the special geographical location of Chengdu, there are only a handful of mountains that can satisfy the mountaineering, mainly Xueshe Mountain, Haiyun Mountain and Wudan Mountain. In the Tang Dynasty, Xueshe Mountain began to conduct the silkworm market. Zhangqiuqianqiong rebuilt the Wansui Pool in the

south of the mountain. These created conditions for the citizens of the Song Dynasty to go to Mountaineering tour. People can also compete in archery and visit the silkworm market while they were in the mountains, which shows that their liveliness was extraordinary.

### ***3.5 Appreciate Flowers***

As early as the Five Dynasty, Sichuan's flower production was very prosperous. There were peon, *Malus spectabilis*, hibiscus, Zhizi and plum blossom, especially the "Tianpeng Peony" and *Malus spectabilis*. Some people said: *Malus spectabilis* was famous in Chengdu, but the people did not take *Malus spectabilis* seriously. Due to the large-scale cultivation of *Malus spectabilis* in the Song Dynasty, the price was not as high as that of the capital. This reflects the huge market of *Malus spectabilis* in Chengdu, and the competition is fierce. Even if the price is not high, it is also an important part of the flower industry in Chengdu. Chengdu has another name called "Rongcheng". It is said that Meng chang's wife like Hibiscus very much, so that Meng chang opened up the "Peony Garden" in the palace, and even called the group to reward the peony. The palace gardens have planted a variety of exotic flowers, and the group of ministers also competed to follow suit. This objectively promoted the development of the flower industry, coupled with "the prosperity of the culture in Sichuan and the emergence of a large number of scholar-official groups, which provided a driving force for the development of flowers"[10].

These laid the foundation for the development of flowers in the Song Dynasty, and Chengdu has produced a flower market. Citizens enjoyed flowers and carried out flower trades in the flower market. They also promote the development of Chengdu's economy while enjoying the flowers.

### ***3.6 The Custom of Touch the Stone***

Wang Qixu said: The custom of Chengdu, the citizen would visit Haiyun Temple in the east of the city on March 21, and they would touch the stone in order to bless have a son. However, the poetry by Ge Shengzhong which also mentioned the custom of touching stones. Chen Weisong made an explanatory note: The time is the 23rd day of the first month, and it is about a fairy tale which called Nuwa Mended the Sky. It can be seen that the time of stone touching activities of Chengdu citizens is relatively flexible. They will visit Haiyun temple in the first month and March, and they are often accompanied by playing activities. People also place their good wishes on it while playing, which reflects the strong expectation of Song people for more children, more grandchildren and more prosperous people.

### ***3.7 Market Tour***

According to "The record of ancient and modern Chengdu" by Zhao Bian, there were markets in Chengdu in the Song Dynasty," just like the lantern market in the

first month of the lunar year, the flower market in February, the silkworm market in March, the brocade market in April, the fan Market in May, the joss stick market in June, the seven treasures of Buddhism market in July, the osmanthus fragrans market in August, the medicine market in September, the wine market in October, the Plum Market in November, and the Taofu market in December”[12].As the flower appreciation tour is listed separately, there is no need to elaborate on the flower market here. This is mainly about the medicine market.

In the Song Dynasty, the pharmaceutical market in Chengdu had a considerable scale. Not only did it have a fixed time and place, but also a wide variety of goods sold. People who participated in the medicine market were from different industries, and various entertainment activities were also born[11]. In the medicine market, citizens can not only shop, but also enjoy singing and dancing. There are many poems which is about medicine market written in the Song Dynasty.

### ***3.8 Watching Sichuan Zaju***

Known as the “land of abundance”, Chengdu's economy developed rapidly under the Song Dynasty. When people lived more leisurely, they also produced” Chuan za ju”. According to the records of ‘the history of Song-yue zhi’, the court worship in the early Song Dynasty once selected actors in the country. There were 32 people who worked in Pingjing, 139 in Pingxichuan, and 16 in Pingjiang. 19 in Ping Taiyuan[13]. As can be seen from the specific data of various places, the number of people in Pingxichuan is much higher, and it can be inferred that the drama of Chengdu is quite prosperous. Regarding the performance of Zaju, there is a record in ‘Sui hua ji li pu’[14].There is clearly recorded the time, place, shed, performance of the performance of the drama in ‘Ji lei pian’[15].In 1974, a tomb of the Song Dynasty was excavated in the construction site of Guangyuan, Sichuan[16]. The four stone walls carving out of the tomb were used in the Song Dynasty and this is also a testimony to the Chengdu drama in the Song Dynasty.

Eight more common leisure lifestyles, not to mention those that are not common or not recorded, can be seen in the rich lifestyle of Chengdu in the Song Dynasty. Various leisure lifestyles have gradually stabilized and slowly formed a leisure culture. Leisure culture is also a collection of people, things and things related to various leisure lifestyles. The colorful leisure life of the Song Dynasty was inseparable from the economic development of the Song Dynasty. The prosperous economy of the Song Dynasty laid the foundation for the leisure life of the citizens, and various leisure lifestyles in turn promoted economic prosperity.

## **4. Characteristics of Leisure Lifestyle in Chengdu in the Song Dynasty**

### ***4.1 There is Government Organization, Encouragement and Support***

When Huanhua Youjiang, the government used a large ship to carry wine, giving each visitor a liter. “The government has a ‘free’ drink maybe be a key reason”

[17].The government not only drove the interest of everyone, but also advertised the wine for free. In the previous section, the feasting activities held in the West Park were also organized by the government. Therefore, many leisure lifestyles in Chengdu are formed by the government.

#### ***4.2 Combined with Various Traditional Festivals***

The wide variety of festivals in the Song Dynasty also provided conditions for a casual lifestyle. People went to Haiyun Mountain and seek stone in Tianchuanjie. It was not only the fun of swimming in the pool, but also the good wishes. 'Shen xian gan yu zhuan' recorded that "Shangsijei, the people all got together to watch the silkworm city" [18] Shangsijei is an ancient Shangsijei is traditional festival of Chinese Han nationality. On this day, people gather to learn to shoot mountains, climb mountains and shoot arrows. These events are combined with festivals to make traditional festivals more fascinating.

#### ***4.3 Combined with Commercial Trade***

From the content of leisure life in Chengdu, we can find that the night market have great amusement and are combined with commercial trade. The market during the day was no longer satisfied with people, and the business hours were getting longer and longer, and finally the night market appeared. "In the Southern Song Dynasty, there was always an endless night market, such as the night market on the 14th, 15th and 16th of the first month of Chengdu"[19]. "Chen Yuanliang, in the book of SuishiGuangji, records Zhang Yong's creation of a silkworm market in front of Baoli temple, trading with the people, playing and drinking "[20]."From the first month to march of each year, there are 15 trading places in the prefecture city and its counties" [21]. Whether it is night market or medicine market, their long-term and large-scale transactions not only promoted the economic development of Chengdu in Song Dynasty, but also enriched the life of Chengdu citizens.

### **5. The Influence of Leisure Lifestyle in Chengdu in the Song Dynasty**

#### ***5.1 Promote the Development of Economic Trade***

The rich leisure lifestyle of Chengdu in the Song Dynasty invisibly promoted economic development. There will be consumption during various festivals, in various markets, and in various banquet events. Take Dayoujiang and Xiaoyoujiang as an example, visit the market such a national activity, the development of commodity economy promotes the demand for coin, promotes the development of money from iron money to banknotes, and finally forms the "Jiaozi", the emergence of "Jiaozi" is an important symbol of prosperity and development.

### ***5.2 Promote the Prosperity of the Wine Industry***

In leisure activities, wine had become an important part. Because most of the leisure activities would be accompanied by a feast, the wine industry was quite prosperous in the Song Dynasty. During the Song Dynasty, Chengdu “along the city inside and outside, everywhere the wine cellars were everywhere, and the wine was full of fragrance” [22]. Due to the prosperity of the drinking style, the winemaking technology had also been greatly improved, and Sichuan had become the main wine producing center in the country. In the Song Dynasty, the government established a wine management officer in Sichuan, and the wine became a monopoly. The brewing, trafficking and taxable income of the wine were strictly controlled by the government. ‘The History of Song Dynasty’ records: “Jiannan three years (In 1129), the manager of finance in Sichuan Zhao Kai changed the wine law started from Chengdu” [23].

### ***5.3 Promote the Development of Literature***

In the Song Dynasty, there were a lot of poems about leisure life, such as many excellent poems on flowers appreciation. Lu You's “Trip to Chengdu” said: that there are 100000 Malus spectabilis in Chengdu, which were prosperous and beautiful in the world. Shen Liyun's poems said that there were thousands of Malus spectabilis in the land of Shu, which were unique; Fan Chengda said: “There were many Malus spectabilis in Bijifang just like a flower house” [24]. There are too many poems about Haishu, and there are dozens of poems by Lu You, and it is conceivable that other poets and poems of other flowers are countless. Although those famous poems were written by the literati, it seems that they have nothing to do with the leisure lifestyle of the Song Dynasty in Chengdu. In fact, it was the Song Dynasty's flower-like atmosphere and various amusement activities that provided the literati a wealth of writing materials, bringing them unique writing ideas, thus many famous poems can be passed down by future generations

### ***5.4 Affect the Formation of the Characteristics of Tianfu Culture***

The characteristics of Tianfu culture “innovation and creation, fashion and elegance, optimistic and inclusive, friendly” can be derived from the leisure culture of Song Dynasty, especially fashion and elegance. The people who live in Shu have always been intelligent, gentle and elegant. The elegance of Chengdu culture lies in their emphasis on literary history and literature just as the poem goes. “West Shu has a long history of literature since ancient times”. For example, Su Shi, the Song Dynasty's “first literati of all ages” born in Meishan, Chengdu, and Fan Chengda, one of the four great poets in the South Song Dynasty, who traveled to Chengdu as an official, and Luyou, one of the “four great poets of Zhongxing”. They have experienced the influence of Shu mountain, Shu River and Shu culture and achieved great literary talents. The writing style of the literati in the area of shu was unique, romantic and literati possessed unrestrained imagination and can leap out of the



cultural background of the central plains. These styles had distinctive characteristics of Shu, which were the fruit of the fertile soil of Chengdu culture, imagining strange and treacherous, romantic and uninhibited, leaping out of the poet's creation under the background of Central Plains culture, has the distinctive characteristics of Shu area, which is the fruit of rich cultural soil in Chengdu.

Since the Song Dynasty, Chengdu has been a place of leisure that is full of vitality and brings together literati. Many of the poems quoted in this article can reproduce the prosperity of the time. At that time, the leisure style of the Song Dynasty officials reminded us of today's leisure capital, Chengdu. Through historical changes, Chengdu still maintains its vitality. It has not disappeared into the people's field of vision as the years have passed, but has become more popular after years of baptism. As Liu Yuping said: During the long time, some amusement activities have been preserved, and some have been forgotten by history. However, the city of Chengdu has never let itself breathe in the sense of heavy rise and fall. Just as generations of Chengdu people can always find the joy and significance of life in a difficult life. Chengdu is now synonymous with leisure. Chengdu's leisure is not formed overnight. The rich leisure lifestyle of Chengdu citizens in the Song Dynasty is also an important part of Chengdu's leisure capital. Nowadays, the development of Chengdu is getting better and better, and it is more and more popular among friends at home and abroad. The leisure culture of Chengdu is a huge attraction. It is no wonder that the literati in the Song Dynasty also like to travel to Chengdu.

### **Acknowledgement**

Fund Project: "The Leisure Lifestyle in Chengdu of the Song Dynasty" is supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities, Southwest Minzu University (2018yxxs01).

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