

The Reasons for the Prosperity of Chengdu's Recreational Culture in Song Dynasty: An Economic Perspective

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Abstract

Through the study of the reasons for the prosperity of Chengdu's recreational culture in Song Dynasty, this paper holds that there are many factors influencing Chengdu's recreational culture in Song Dynasty, among which the most important is economic. The massive growth of Chengdu's population during the Song Dynasty provided participants and consumers for its recreational activities. The prosperity of Chengdu's economy in Song Dynasty provided the material security for its recreational activities. At the same time, the rise of monthly market with different themes, festival markets and night markets provides the contents, venues and opportunities for recreational activities in Song Dynasty.

Keywords

Song Dynasty, Chengdu, Recreational Culture, Economy Factor

1. Introduction

Regardless of the age, recreational activities can portray people's social life to varying degrees. Recreation in this article refers to the general term of various leisure activities that people participate in after getting rid of heavy production and labour. Since ancient times, the recreational activities in Chengdu have been flourishing, and reached its peak in Song Dynasty. The folk custom that Chengdu people like to play provided a historical basis for the prosperity of Chengdu's recreational activities in Song Dynasty. The support and participation of the rulers provided a political basis for the prosperity of Chengdu's recreational activities in the Song Dynasty. The increase of leisure time provided time guarantee for the prosperity of Chengdu recreational activities in Song Dynasty.

In addition, the prosperous economy of Chengdu in Song Dynasty provided the economic foundation for its prosperous recreational culture. So, this paper attempts to explore the phenomenon, the prosperity of Chengdu's recreational culture in Song Dynasty from the economic perspective.

2. The Prosperous Economy of Chengdu in Song Dynasty

2.1. The Massive Growth of Chengdu's Population

The economy of Chengdu in Song Dynasty was dominated by agriculture, handicraft industry and commerce. In the traditional agricultural society, the development of agriculture is closely related to the increase of labour. The development of handicraft industry needs to rely on the development of agriculture to provide raw materials and surplus labour. The development of commerce also depends on the growth of population and consumption. Therefore, the number of population in traditional agricultural society is very important.

In 639 A.D. (Tang Dynasty), Chengdu had 117,889 households with a population of 740,312; In 756 A.D. (Tang Dynasty), Chengdu had 160,950 households with a population of 928,199 (Liu, 1975). In 1080 A.D. (Song Dynasty), there were 771,533 households in Chengdu, with a population of 3,857,663, 70.2 per square kilometer; In 1162 A.D. (Song Dynasty), there were 1,097,787 households with a population of 5,488,985 and 100.1 per square kilometer; In 1223 A.D. (Song Dynasty), there were 1,139,790 households in Chengdu, with a population of 5,698,950 and 103.8 per square kilometer (Ma, 2011). The detail information is shown in **Figure 1**. It can be seen from the above data that compared with the Tang Dynasty, the number of households and the population of Chengdu in Song Dynasty had doubled.

In Song Dynasty, the massive growth of Chengdu's population provided labour for its agricultural, handicraft industry, and commercial development. It was also the original driving force of the prosperity Chengdu's economy in Song Dynasty. Furthermore, the prosperity of Chengdu's economy provided consumers

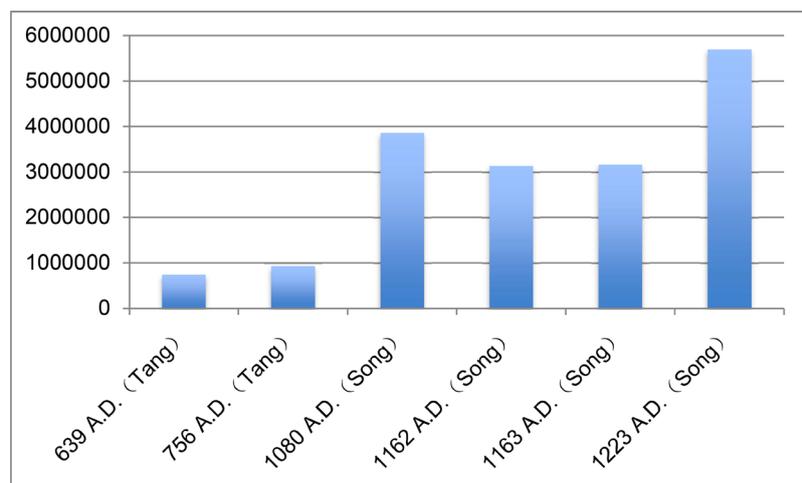


Figure 1. Population comparison of Chengdu in Tang and Song dynasties (part).

and participants that needed for Chengdu's recreational activities.

2.2. Rich Products and Prosperous Trade of Chengdu in Song Dynasty

During the Song Dynasty, Chengdu was rich in products, and its products such as tea and silk fabrics accounted for a high proportion of the country. In Southern Song Dynasty, there were 20 tea plantations in Chengdu, which produced about 8.1 million Kg of tea every year (Li, 2000). But, the average annual tea production in Song Dynasty was only 25 million Kg. The annual output of tea in Chengdu accounts for about one third of the country's total.

In addition, Chengdu was also the main producer of silk fabrics in Song Dynasty (Figure 2). In 1172, Chengdu produced 441,097 pieces of silk, ranking the fifth in China (Xu, 2014). Judging from the total number of silk fabrics handed over to the central government in Chengdu each year, the status of Chengdu's silk industry in the state finances of the Song Dynasty was quite important. At that time, the production and trade volume of various silk fabrics in Chengdu was in the forefront of China, especially the high-grade silk fabrics represented by Shu brocade (Figure 3). The *Song Hui Yao Ji Gao* recorded that: Chengdu



Figure 2. Shu brocade loom.

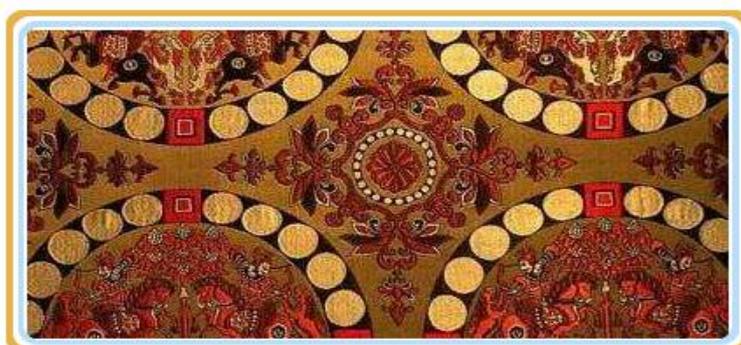


Figure 3. Shu brocade.

produced 74% of the country's high-grade silk products every year (Xu, 2014). Due to the development of silk production, the development of the whole industry has been promoted. At that time, there were a large number of folk silk weaving craftsmen called "weaving households" and peasant family handicraft workshops. And the government-run silk weaving factories began to emerge in the late Song Dynasty. At that time, Chengdu has become an important silk production and trading center in China.

In Song Dynasty, Chengdu formed a well-known Chinese herbal medicine materials trading market centered on the trade of medicinal materials. With the formation of Chengdu and Meishan book printing centers, the paper industry and printing industry in Chengdu have developed rapidly. The production and trade of ceramics and wine also showed a prosperous situation. In a short, in Song Dynasty, Chengdu had a great development in commodity production and trade compared with previous generations. The prosperity of economic brought a large number of foreign populations, and at the same time provided a material guarantee for the development of Chengdu's recreation.

2.3. High Proportion of Tax Payment

Due to the prosperity of the economy and the abundance of products, Sichuan in Song Dynasty became the main source of central government taxes. Then, as the center of Sichuan, Chengdu bears most of the government's taxes. According to Lu Tao of the Northern Song Dynasty, the area of BaShu was very large, the land was fertile and rich in products, and trade was prosperous. The annual taxes paid account for one-third of the country's total (Lv, 2011). In Song Dynasty, Sichuan's business tax accounted for a large proportion of the country's business tax revenue. Taking the year 1074 A.D. as an example, the total business tax revenue of the Song Dynasty government in that year was 6.41 million guan, and Sichuan accounted for 1.66 million guan (Xu, 2014). In Song Gaozong's time, the government's liquor tax revenue was 14 million guan per year, while Sichuan alone reached 6.9 million guan (Li, 2000).

In Song Dynasty, Chengdu was the political, economic and cultural center of Sichuan, and its products and taxes accounted for more than half of the entire Sichuan. It can be seen that the economy of Chengdu in Song Dynasty was very prosperous, which provided material guarantee for the recreation of Chengdu.

3. The Prosperous Markets of Chengdu in Song Dynasty

In Song Dynasty, with the development of economy, the function of city gradually changed from single political function to economic function. Well, the market economy in Chengdu was particularly eye-catching. In Song Dynasty, Chengdu was famous for its monthly market with different themes, festival markets, night markets and so on. At that time, most of the recreational activities were carried out around these markets. These markets provided the contents, venues and opportunities for Chengdu's recreational activities.

3.1. Monthly Market with Different Themes

In Song Dynasty, with the development of agriculture and handicraft industry, Chengdu's commodity market further expanded. The original regular markets developed more perfect, and the local characteristic products were sold monthly, forming the famous "monthly market" in Chengdu history. "Monthly market" refers to the "lantern market in January, flower market in February, silkworm market in March (Figure 4), silk fabric market in April, fan market in May, spice market in June, daily utensils market in July, fragrant market in August, Chinese herbal medicine market in September (Figure 5), wine market in October, plum blossom market in November and Taofu market in December" (Yang, 1937). The formation of the "monthly market" made Chengdu have a special market for buying and selling certain products every month. But in these specialized



Figure 4. Silkworm market of Daci Temple.

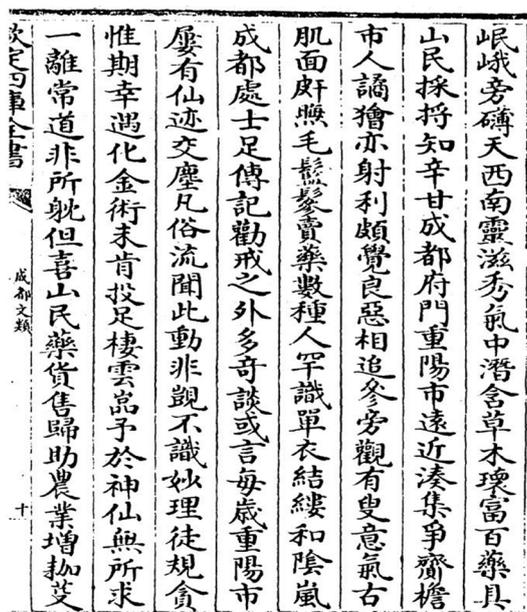


Figure 5. A poem about the Chinese-herbal medicine market.

markets, in addition to selling items related to the theme of each month, such as flowers, silk fabrics, and Chinese herbal medicine, other items were also sold. Among the twelve markets with different themes, the silkworm market, flower market, Chinese herbal medicine market, and lantern market were the most famous. In these markets, some recreational activities have been carried out, and people also regarded visiting the markets as an important way of recreation.

3.2. Festival Markets

According to the records of *SuiHua Ji Lipu*, *Shuzhong Guangji* and other literature, there were more than 20 major festivals in Chengdu during the Song Dynasty. In these festivals, people would go out to play, and government officials would participate in celebrating the festivals with people. Based on this, many festival markets had been formed. The main festival markets in Chengdu during the Song Dynasty include: Lantern Festival market in January, Outing Festival market in February, Shangsi Festival market in March, Dragon Boat Festival market in May, Qiqiao Festival market in July, and Double Ninth Festival market in September (The months here refers to the month of the Chinese lunar calendar).

Before and after the Lantern Festival, the Lantern Festival market formed in Daci Temple and Wumenlou, people can not only watched the lanterns and buy or sell lanterns, but also had recreational activities such as lighting the lanterns for tourists to participate in (Figure 6). On the Outing Festival, the people of the whole city went out to visit Baoli Temple in Huanhuaxi. A market was created in

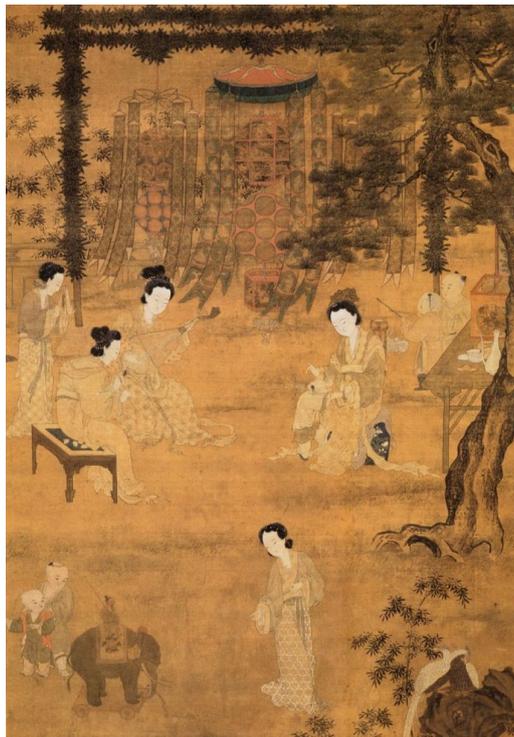


Figure 6. Lantern Festival market.

front of the Baoli Temple, where people bought and sold goods, played and drank and ate (Chen, 1993). On the Shangsi Festival, the people of Chengdu went to the Xueshe Mountain in the north of the city to went hiking and worship at the Zhizhengguan at the top of the mountain, praying for a good harvest of silkworm cocoons. A market for buying and selling talisman was formed before Zhizhengguan (Fei, 2003). On the Hanshi Festival, Chengdu local officials set up a comprehensive market in their office in Xiyuan. In the Xiyuan, there was a wine market, a flower market and a performance market. During this period, people would visit the garden and play (Fei, 2003).

The Dragon Boat Festival, around Daci Temple, formed a special market for selling mugwort, zongzi and other commodities needed for the Dragon Boat Festival. In this market, people can also bought and sold spices, daily necessities, fans and other commodities. On the Qiqiao Festival (Figure 7), a market for buying and selling things for Qiqiao Festival was formed on both banks of the Jinjiang River next to the Daci Temple. In this market, people can participate in some recreational activities of begging for Qiqiao, and at the same time put lantern in Jinjiang river to pray for a good marriage. On the Double Ninth Festival, the famous medicine market was held between Yujuguan and Wumen. People here can not only buy all kinds of panacea and rare things, but also can participate in fortune-telling, praying, singing and dancing, banquet drinking and other recreational activities.



Figure 7. Qi Qiao Festival.

4. Conclusion

Marx believed that the economic foundation decided the upper floor. As part of the upper floors, recreational culture is deeply influenced by the economic foundation. The massive growth of Chengdu's population in Song Dynasty provided labour and consumers for agriculture, handicraft and service industries. The mass production of tea, silk, medicinal materials, pottery, wine, paper and other commodities provided material guarantee for the prosperity of Chengdu's recreational culture. The formation of trading markets represented by the monthly markets and festival markets brought a large number of merchants and tourists to Chengdu. At the same time, new recreational contents were produced in these markets, and Chengdu eventually formed a prosperous recreational culture centered on market activities. It can be seen that the prosperity of Chengdu's recreational culture in Song Dynasty was based on the prosperity of Chengdu's economic activities. In addition, how and to what extent the prosperity of various markets in Chengdu during the Song Dynasty promoted the development of recreational culture still needs further study.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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