

The Diaries of the Song Dynasty: The Development and Flourishing of the Diary Genre in Ancient China

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Abstract: The diary, as a narrative literary form organized by daily entries, has a long history in ancient China. Its earliest origins can be traced back to the ancient practice of “knot recording.” The oracle bones of the Yin Ruins also contain records of the daily affairs of our ancestors. The early forms of diaries began to appear in the annals and historical records of the pre-Qin period, showing the embryonic form of date-based documentation. In the *Xin Xu* (New Preface) by Liu Xiang of the Western Han Dynasty, there is a saying, “Record the errors of the ruler and make daily entries.” However, this concept of “daily entries” merely pertains to the official duties of historiographers and is a method of recording events. It does not possess the literary characteristics of a diary in the true sense. Based on existing literature, the diary genre underwent several developmental stages. Li Ao’s *Lai Nan Lu* (The Record of Coming to the South) in the Tang Dynasty marked its inception, followed by Zhao Bian’s *Yu Shi Bei Guan Ri Ji* (The Imperial Examination Officer’s Diary) in the Song Dynasty, the first work to adopt the term “diary.” The genre was further established by He Fuzheng’s *Wen Zhang Bian Ti Hui Xuan* (The Selected Compilation of Prose Styles and Types) in the Ming Dynasty, and by the Qing Dynasty, it had developed into a grand spectacle. Its vitality remains unabated to this day, embraced by scholars and laymen alike, covering everything from profound thoughts to worldly affairs. Therefore, its complexity and comprehensiveness cannot be overlooked. The Song Dynasty, in particular, marks a significant period in the development of the diary literary form, characterized by an abundance of high-quality diary writings that reflect the Song people’s vibrant enthusiasm for diary literature. Nevertheless, owing to the unconventional and peripheral characteristics of the diary genre, the academic community has focused more on its value as a source of historical documentation, rather than exploring it theoretically as a literary form, especially with regards to Song Dynasty diaries. In this academic context, examining these diaries from a literary perspective not only deepens our understanding of diary composition but also unveils the distinct charm of Song Dynasty literature

Keywords: Diary, Knot Recording, Song Dynasty, Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Origin and Characteristics of the Diary Literary Form

The Qing scholar Wang Kaijun once stated, “In the realm of informal writings, nothing precedes the diary.” Regarding the origins of diaries,

Chen Zuogao, in his *Zhong Guo Ri Ji Shi Lue* (Brief History of Chinese Diaries), argues: “An examination of Tang Dynasty diaries reveals that, despite their short length and limited time frame, they already exhibited the basic structure and pattern of diaries, encompassing simple daily life content, travel distances and itineraries, and commentary on political news and figures.” Furthermore, from the perspective of diary development, it is believed that the genre originated in the Tang Dynasty (Chen, 2015)”. Chen Zuogao, through continuous verification, further proposed that the *Feng Shan Yi Ji* (Record of the Fengshan Ceremony) by Ma Dibo of the Han Dynasty, which detailed Emperor Guangwu’s Fengshan (offer sacrifices to heaven) rituals at Mount Tai on a daily basis, pioneered the diary form. However, the earliest known diary entry can be attributed to Li Ao’s ‘Record of Traveling to the South’ during the fourth year of the Yuanhe reign of Emperor Xianzong of Tang. Ju Dangsheng believed that the wooden slips unearthed from Tomb No. 5 at Hu Chang in Hanjiang, Jiangsu, which recorded the prison affairs of Wang Fengshi (who died in 71 BC) of the Western Han Dynasty, already displayed the basic form of a diary, and could be considered the earliest diary text. This view has gained some recognition in the academic community. Chen Zuogao also stated in *Li Dai Ri Ji Cong Tan* (Discussions on Diaries Through the Ages): “The appearance of these wooden slips from Wang Fengshi’s *Yu Zhong Ri Ji* (Diary in Prison) provides us with the earliest example of a diary by an author with a known name, complete with specific dates. This discovery sufficiently verifies the diary’s origin, tracing it back to the Western Han Dynasty, around two thousand years ago, before the Common Era (Chen, 2004)”. Wu Chengxue conducted a study on the history of diary as a literary form. He noted that during the Ming Dynasty, He Fuzheng, in compiling *The Selected Compilation of Prose Styles and Types*, specifically included a category for “diaries,” highlighting their stylistic features: “Diaries are written daily at will, with their essence lying in the comprehensive recording of even the most trivial details of life. They originated with Ouyang Xiu’s *Yu Yi Zhi* (Record of Military Service) and Lu You’s *Ru Shu Ji* (Record of Entering Shu), progressing to various records by Xiao Boyu, whose profound thoughts and distant resonances are reminiscent of the Jin Dynasty writers. Each diary consists of several sections, together constituting the entire genre (Wu, 2008).” This indicates that the concept of diary as a literary genre was already established in the Song Dynasty, and He Fuzheng’s examples demonstrate his attempt to analyze the subtle literary consciousness present in different diary texts. Deng Jian elucidated the origins, evolution, and characteristics of the diary genre from a stylistic

perspective. He posited, “The widespread emergence of the diary was influenced by the prevalence of private historical writing during the Song Dynasty; the naming of the diary genre, however, derived from the compilation of official calendars (Deng, 2014).” Transcending the limitations of tracing the source of individual diary entries, he adopted a comprehensive approach to explore the origins of the diary genre. His analysis, based on the principles of literary inheritance and evolution, coherently elucidated the form and characteristics of diaries. In essence, what is termed as diary literature refers to prose written in a diary format, characterized primarily by the inclusion of specific dates at the beginning of the text. It may involve recording events daily or selecting specific days to document. These entries are then compiled in chronological order according to the dates. The content recorded is authentic and credible. It is noteworthy that tracing the origins of the diary is closely linked to contemporary understanding of this literary form, and this tracing also influences the current definition of the diary genre. The practice of daily recording has a long history, but the creation of diary literature as a form of private writing, particularly reflecting the author’s introspective “non-public writing” mindset, flourished from the Song Dynasty onwards. Huang Tingjian of the Song Dynasty employed a diary system that was simple and concise, establishing a standard for the diary genre. It is considered the first mature and definitive private diary in ancient China (Hargett, 1985; Tsui, 2015).

2. CLASSIFICATION OF SONG DYNASTY DIARIES

The discussion on the diary literary form also involves categorizing the types of diaries. Currently, the academic classification of diaries from the Song Dynasty is primarily based on three aspects: the content of the diary, its writing purpose, and the author’s identity. Regarding content, Chen Zuogao in his article *Tan Song Ren Ri Ji* (On Song Dynasty Diaries) categorizes Song Dynasty diaries into travel diaries, biographical records, historical materials, and so on. Gu Hongyi and Li Wen, in their edited work *Song Ren Ri Ji Cong Bian* (A Collection of Song Dynasty Diaries), divide these diaries into categories such as those related to diplomatic missions or travel, governance-related diaries, and others (Harui, 2018; Protass, 2016). The Japanese scholar Kosuke Tamai, in the third chapter ‘Examination of Classification’ of his book *Study of Diary Literature*, discusses the classification of diaries. He classified 550 types of Chinese diaries into six

categories: domestic diaries, travel journals, private records of specific events, official records, miscellaneous collections, and creative diaries. Additionally, Song Dynasty diaries can be divided into categories such as those related to official travel, diplomatic missions, everyday life, historical events, or classified as verbatim records, daily tasks, and travel records. They can also be summarized as diaries of personal life, academic diaries, duty-related diaries, and other types. Based on the purpose of writing, Song Dynasty diaries can be categorized into those written for others, for oneself, or initially for oneself but later preserved for others. From the perspective of the author's identity, they are mainly categorized into diaries of significant political figures, scholar-type diaries, and general literati diaries (Zhang, 2003). In summary, the classification standards for Song Dynasty diaries remain a topic open to further exploration. The existing diaries can be categorized into four types: Diplomatic Diaries (including those written on diplomatic missions, accompanying missions, and embassy-related diaries), Political Affairs Diaries (written during the period of governance, detailing observations within the court and the author's personal political stance), Travel Diaries (encompassing diaries written by officials on their way to assignments or to the capital, as well as those solely documenting sightseeing, visiting relatives, or friends), and Personal Life Diaries (recording the individual's daily life) (Liu et al., 2020). For specific extant works, see Table 1 below:

Table 1: (a) Classification of Extant Song Dynasty Diaries

Creation Era	Type & Number	Author's Works
Northern Song	Diplomatic Diaries (6 types)	Lu Zhen's Cheng Yao Lu, Chen Xiang's Shi Liao Yu Lu, Shen Kuo's Yi Mao Ru Guo Bie Lu, Zhang Shunmin's Jia Xu Shi Liao Lu, Lü Xiji et al. Yuan You Qi Nian Zheng Dan Jie Song Ban Yu Lu, and Xu Jing's Shi Gao Li Lu.
	Political Affairs Diaries (13 types)	Qian Weiyan's Qian Wei Yan Ri Ji, Zhao Gai's Zhao Kang Jing Ri Lu, Zhao Bian's Zhao Qing Xian Yu Shi Ri Ji, Si Maguang's Wen Gong Ri Lu, Wang Anshi's Xi Ning Ri Lu, Liu Zhi's Liu Zhi Ri Ji, Lü Huiqing's Lü Ji Fu Ri Lu, Zeng Bu's Zeng Gong Yi Lu, Lin Xi's Lin Wen Jie Yuan You Ri Ji and Lin Wen Jie Shao Sheng Ri Ji, Fan Zuyu's Fan Tai Shi Ri Ji, Wang Yansou's Wang Yan Sou Ri Lu, and Gao Yongnian's Long You Ri Lu.
	Travel Diaries (4 types)	Ou Yangxiu's Yu Yi Zhi, Zhang Li's You Cheng Nan Ji, Zhang Shunmin's Chen Xing Lu, and Zhao Dingchen's You Shan Lu.

Table 1: (b) Classification of Extant Song Dynasty Diaries

Creation Era	Type & Number	Author's Works
During the Northern and Southern Song	Travel Diaries (4 types)	Ou Yangxiu's Yu Yi Zhi, Zhang Li's You Cheng Nan Ji, Zhang Shunmin's Chen Xing Lu, and Zhao Dingchen's You Shan Lu.
	Personal Life Diaries (1 type)	Huang Tingjian's Yi Zhou Yi You Jia Cheng.
	Political Affairs Diaries (2 types)	Zheng Wangzhi's Jing Kang Cheng Xia Feng Shi Lu, and Li Gang's Jing Kang Chuan Xin Lu
Southern Song	Diplomatic Diaries (7 types)	Wang Hui's Shao Xing Jia Yin Tong He Lu, Fan Chengda's Lan Pei Lu, Zhou Hui's Bei Yuan Lu, Lou Yao's Bei Xing Ri Lu, Cheng Zhuo's Shi Jin Lu, Ni Si's Chong Ming Jie Guan Ban Yu Lu, and Yan Guangda's Qi Qing Shi Xing Cheng Ji.
	Political Affairs Diaries (11 types)	Li Zhengmin's Yi You Hang Hai Ji, Shen Yuqiu's Shen Bi Xian Ri Ji, Zhao Ding's Jian Yan Bi Lu, Bing Chen Bi Lu, and Ding Si Bi Lu, Chao Gongsu's Ji Shan Ri Ji, Zhou Bida's Qin Zheng Lu, Long Fei Lu, and Si Ling Lu, Peng Guinian's Peng Gui Nian Ri Ji, and Xu Yuanjie's Jin Jiang Ri Ji.
	Travel Diaries (11 types)	Zheng Gangzhong's Xi Zheng Dao Li Ji, Lu You's Ru Shu Ji, Fan Chengda's Can Luan Lu and Wu Chuan Lu, Zhou Bida's Gui Lu Ling Ri Ji, Xian Ju Lu, Fan Zhou You Shan Lu, Zou Shi Lu, and Nan Gui Lu, and Lü Zuqian's Ru Yue Lu and Ru Min Lu.
	Personal Life Diaries (1 type)	Lü Zuqian's Geng Zi Xin Chou Ri Ji.

3. THE LITERARY VALUE OF SONG DYNASTY DIARIES

Many representative works from the Song Dynasty diaries have become exemplars for subsequent diary literature, holding a unique literary status and influence. During the Northern Song period, most diary authors were court officials, and their recorded content was closely linked to the political climate of the time, reflecting a literary concept and creative atmosphere of using diaries to complement the recording of history. As Chen Zuogao points out in *Brief History of Chinese Diaries*, "Diaries from the Northern Song that have been passed down to the present generally focus on one phase or aspect of life (Hargett, 2009)." In contrast, Southern Song diaries

are best exemplified by travel diaries, particularly those by Lu You and Fan Chengda, whose diary writing profoundly influenced later prose. The reason lies mainly in their diaries gradually shifting away from being influenced by political affairs towards more personalized expression. This transition not only enriched the literary flavor of their diary works but also offered researchers greater opportunities for interpretation and exploration of meaning. Although defining the research scope of diaries within specific historical periods may present certain limitations, it establishes effective parameters for researchers. The close connection between Song Dynasty diary studies and diplomatic and political literature indicates the influence and constraints of the era on diary themes. While the format and system of diaries have evolved, these changes weren't the core of literary transformation. Themes specific to the era often more vividly demonstrate the vitality and influence of diary literature. Particularly noteworthy are unique diary types that emerged during specific historical phases, such as Song Dynasty diplomatic diaries, which bear distinct temporal characteristics and thus carry additional information and cultural reflections of the era. The Song Dynasty marks the beginning of diary literature, where the works of key authors are considered exemplary. Although many officials during the Jiayou era kept diaries, Ouyang Xiu is acknowledged as the true forerunner of the Song Dynasty's diary style. American scholar James Hargett noted the literary status of Fan Chengda's diaries early on, stating, "Fan Chengda created a paradigm for ancient Chinese travel diaries, significantly influencing subsequent travel diary writers and contributing greatly to the development of travel literature during and after the Song Dynasty (James, 1986)." From a stylistic standpoint, Fan Chengda's works such as *Lan Pei Lu*, *Can Luan Lu*, and *Wu Chuan Lu* (Record of the Wu Ship) marked the establishment of the diary-style travelogue as a new literary genre. Additionally, diaries written by foreigners about their experiences in Song, hold significant scholarly value. For instance, diaries like *Du Song Ji* (A Record of Crossing into Song) by the Japanese monk Kaikaku and *Can Tian Tai Wu Tai Shan Ji* (The Record of a Pilgrimage to the Tiantai and Wutai Mountains) by Jōjin cover a wide range of topics, including the construction of temples, Buddhist art, monastic systems, translations of Buddhist scriptures, local governance of the Song court, international trade, cultural geography, scenic spots, rural transportation, urban economics, languages, and customs. These were firsthand accounts and observations by monks who visited the Song Dynasty, providing fresh historical materials and new perspectives for the study of Sino-Japanese relations during the Song era (Tsui, 2015;

Windscrip, 2021).

4. THE INTERPLAY AND INTEGRATION OF SONG DYNASTY DIARIES WITH OTHER LITERARY FORMS

In his work *The Selected Compilation of Prose Styles and Types*, He Fuzheng specifically established a separate category for diaries, complete with an introduction and examples, officially recognizing and classifying the diary genre for the first time. This played a significant role in the development and evolution of diaries. The fundamental characteristics that distinguish diaries from other genres include: organizing events by date, writing freely and spontaneously with a focus on narrating events, and providing immediate accounts that are authentic and credible. However, the stylistic features of diaries are not pure but highly adaptable, influenced by factors such as the diversification of authors' identities, a folk-oriented writing stance, personalized writing perspectives, and a spontaneous writing style. These make it difficult for diaries to conform to a stable writing pattern or system. Diaries are characterized by distinctive creative personalities and an expansive literary essence, displaying stylistic traits of spontaneous and versatile writing and embodying a spirit of naturalness and unrestraint. This leads to an ambiguous positioning of diaries within the traditional Chinese literary system and diverse opinions on their form and attributes. Moreover, diaries possess both practical and literary characteristics and inherit the functions and narrative features of historical biographies, making them prone to overlapping and intermingling with other literary genres. This tendency to blend with genres such as historical records, miscellanies, essays, note-style fictions, and travelogues obscures the distinctions between diaries and other literary forms. The characteristic of intertwining and mutual influence among these genres is particularly evident in the diaries of the Song Dynasty.

(1) Diaries and Officially Compiled Calendars: Officially compiled calendars provided a template and opportunity for naming and shaping diaries, signifying a transition between two different types of literary genres: from an official historical record to a folk narrative style. Although diaries inherited calendars' superficial form and characteristics of focusing on narrative, along with a diverse and flexible nature in content, their intrinsic qualities underwent a shift and transformation, resulting in a distinct literary genre from calendars. Although diaries are characterized by their spontaneous and free-form writing, their basic function as a genre is to

record and narrate events. In fact, beyond their naming and form, diaries can serve as references for various official documents, including daily court records, political chronicles, calendars, annals, and even national histories and imperial annals. This highlights the value of diaries as historical sources, as they could be consulted by government officials or historians in compiling these official records. It is their diversity and flexibility that allow diaries to break free from the constraints of traditional genres, surpassing orthodox forms like daily court records, chronological histories, and official calendars, thus exhibiting a strong vitality as a literary form.

(2) Diaries and Notes: Diaries and notes not only share a common historical origin but also exhibit similar stylistic features of freeform writing and versatility in content. There is no consensus in the academic world regarding the exact definition of notes, as opinions vary. Due to the unique characteristic of diaries to record events in chronological order, the scope of content in diaries is generally narrower than in notes. Sometimes, early diary works are categorized as notes, as seen in collections like *Quan Song Bi Ji* (Complete Notes of the Song), which includes many renowned diary works (Ebrey et al., 2023; Protass, 2016).

(3) Diaries and Diplomatic Chronicles and Dialogue Records: Diplomatic chronicles and dialogue records are two types of factual records in diplomatic activities, both of which were predominantly created during the Song Dynasty. Diplomatic dialogue records were an official literary form of the Song Dynasty, originating from the tradition of *Zhuan Dui* (specialized dialogues) in the political system. They represented the textualization of diplomatic dialogues, fundamentally driven by political motives. Similarly, diplomatic chronicles are born from diplomatic activities, primarily documenting observations and experiences, including landscapes, culture, customs, geography and natural resources. In contrast, diplomatic dialogue records mainly document the question-and-answer sessions in diplomatic activities, showcasing interactions, conversations, greetings, and debates between parties. Both dialogues and chronicles can be recorded in the form of diaries, meaning while dialogues and chronicles focus on specific content, diaries serve as the format or medium for recording this content. For instance, in the Song Dynasty, diaries of prominent diplomats like Fan Chengda, Zhou Bida, and Lou Yao effectively served as official records of diplomatic dialogues. Hu Chuanzhi once discussed: “The daily records made during missions to the Jin State differ from ordinary diaries. These literati might not have a habit of diary writing but took it up specifically for their special role as diplomats. Although the content of these diaries predominantly focuses on official

matters and often reflects strong patriotic sentiments, they tend to exhibit more personal and literary characteristics than formal dialogue records of the missions to Jin, positioning them somewhere between official documents and personal diaries (Hu, 2003).” From the late Northern Song Dynasty, when the Jin people first approached the border, to the eve of the Jin State’s collapse in the late Southern Song period, there were long-term diplomatic exchanges between the Song and Jin dynasties. Especially after the Shaoxing Peace Treaty, the deployment of envoys became more standardized in terms of purpose, timing, and routes. Envoys venturing into foreign lands naturally carried the responsibility of spying on enemy conditions and were expected to maintain keen observational skills. During specific historical periods, there was an intersection between the genres of diaries, dialogue records, and chronicles. For instance, the dialogue records and chronicles of Song Dynasty envoys were often part of the authors’ diaries.

(4) Diaries and Travelogues: In discussing the relationship between the genres of diaries and travelogues, it’s important to recognize that some diaries primarily focus on travel and geographical descriptions, thus falling under the category of travel literature. Therefore, the introduction and acceptance of the concept of ‘diary-style travelogues’ represent a significant conclusion in academic studies of their relationship. The rise of diary-style travelogues during the Song Dynasty marked a major transformation in the style of travel literature. The earliest diary-style travelogues focusing on landscapes were established in Ouyang Xiu’s *Record of Military Service*. This genre was further pioneered by Lu You’s *Record of Entering Shu*, Xu Jing’s *Shi Gao Li Lu* (Record of the Mission to Goryeo), and Fan Chengda’s *Record of the Wu Ship*. Particularly, the emergence of specialized works like ‘Ru Shu Ji’ marked a new phase in the development of travel literature during the Song Dynasty, signifying an evolution in this literary style. Diary-style travelogues can be considered a thematic category within diaries, specifically focusing on the experiences, observations, and feelings encountered during travels. This form was established against the backdrop of the classical literature movement of the Tang and Song Dynasties, and the flourishing of Song Dynasty note-style essays also contributed to the development of this literary form. In terms of structure, style, form, and nature, diary-style travelogues utilize a daily chronology format to highlight the three essential elements of travel writing: routes, observations, and sentiments. These travelogues are characterized by their straightforward and unadorned language, a preference for narrative and critical analysis in style, and embody a blend of travel accounts and social interactions. The

maturation of diary-style landscape travelogues in the Song era laid the foundation for the development of diary-style travelogues in later generations.

(5) Diaries and Travel Records: Travel records describe observations made during journeys, portray landscapes and historical sites, record local customs and human interactions, and express the author's emotions. They epitomize the Chinese prose tradition of valuing practicality, authenticity, and brevity, reflecting the unique characteristics of national literature. By the Song Dynasty, the genre of travel records had evolved with an increasing awareness of its distinct literary style, differentiating itself substantially from travelogues, diaries, and notes. The scope of travel records is broader than that of travelogues. Although Song Dynasty travel records tended to be written in the style of diaries, the essence of travel records lies in their content, which is focused on documenting travel experiences and observations. In contrast, diaries are characterized by their format, particularly the daily documentation of events. In the Song era, there was considerable overlap between these two forms, yet they maintained distinct features. In terms of writing practice, Song Dynasty travel records transitioned from segment-by-segment detailed descriptions to a diary-style format, greatly expanding the narrative space. However, constrained by the diary format, their style was predominantly concise.

Descriptions of landscapes were slightly embellished, while commentaries and reflections were brief and to the point. References to research or historical facts were also succinct and clear. Notably, travel records of official banishment during the Song Dynasty shed their somber and sorrowful tone, transforming into relaxed journeys of visiting friends and scenic spots. Officials in exile wrote about their travel experiences and observations in a light-hearted manner in their diary-style travel records, leading to a predominance of an unburdened, optimistic, and carefree image of the literati in these records.

(6) Diaries and Poetry: Ma Dongyao noted, "A large number of works in the poetry of the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties are marked with dates, with diary-style poetry being a common genre in the Southern Song poetic circles (Ma, 2018)." Diary-style poetry of the Song Dynasty displayed diverse levels of connection between their titles and content, enriching the depth and subtleties of the poems. Based on the relationship between the title and content, Song dynasty diary-style poetry can be categorized into three types: those where the content echoes the title and relates to the indicated date; those where the title corresponds to the content, but the date marking has little relevance; and those that abandon

the traditional format of combining date with content in the title, opting instead for titles that are solely dates (or more specific times such as “night”, “midnight”, “before the crowing of the rooster”). Diary-style poetry, with its thorough detailing of trivial matters and meticulous observation of time, provided a suitable form for writing about the routine aspects of life. This style not only epitomizes the understated elegance of Song Dynasty poetry but also enriches its essence by juxtaposing the ordinary with the extraordinary, and the real with the surreal. These contrasts deepen the understated nature of the poetry. Therefore, diary-style poetry is considered a significant form that embodies and showcases the everyday characteristics prevalent in Song Dynasty poetry. In summary, the intermingling of the diary with other literary forms is not merely a matter of inclusion or a simple relationship between form and content. In the research process, it's essential to clarify two issues: First, the fusion of literary styles is not static but is driven by multiple factors such as the author, text, literary function, and potential readers, all within the closely watched context of politics, society, and culture. Taking the development of the travel diaries in the Song Dynasty as an example, the shift in the diarists' focus transformed diary writing from the public discourse space of official records and dialogues to a more private discourse space, one akin to “private language expression” centered around landscapes and personal reflections. This shift stimulated the intrinsic dynamics of diary-style travelogues, continually evolving the mainstream diary paradigm through dynamic intermingling of forms. Furthermore, despite the seemingly eclectic and fragmented nature of diary literature, it is not devoid of stability. Maintaining the genre's essence amidst the influence of various literary styles is possible only through “innovating while respecting traditional constraints.” This approach ensures the diary form does not lose its distinct identity. Exploring the inherent constraints unique to the diary form, which constitute its core stability, is crucial. The immediacy and temporal nature of the diary genre preserve the originality and vibrancy of the text. Thus, in studying the diaries of the Song Dynasty, it's essential to recognize “time” as the primary driving force of the diary form. Establishing a consciousness of time and a sense of recording enables a deeper understanding of the tension between the themes and content of the diary.

5. CONCLUSION

From a stylistic perspective, diaries are one of the more commonly used

forms in applied literature. Historically, they are often viewed as primary sources due to their authors' direct experiences. Culturally, diaries are akin to encyclopedias, encompassing a wide array of content. Chinese traditional literature is inherently rich in emotive culture, and there has been no shortage of scholars studying emotions in ancient literature. This is exemplified in *Wen Xin Diao Long: Qing Cai Pian* (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons: Emotion and literary expression), which emphasizes creating literature driven by emotions. It advocates that writing should primarily express the author's intentions, thereby establishing "emotion as the essence of literature" as a key aesthetic in literary art. The expression of "emotion and will" has been the core of research in classical Chinese poetics. While diaries have a practical attribute, as Song Dynasty diarists began to move away from public discourse towards more personalized and private writing, emotions played an increasingly crucial role in the creation of the text. The unique ways in which the diarists' emotions fluctuated and were projected in their writing during the Song Dynasty offer a valuable perspective for research. Moreover, examining these diaries to reconstruct the emotional culture of Song Dynasty scholars not only highlights the unique wisdom of traditional China but also helps to explore and enrich the emotional cultural heritage for contemporary Chinese people.

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