

# The Embodiment of Su Shi's Style of Conveying Emotion by Work in Poetry and Calligraphy

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**Abstract:** Su Shi's art work which change according to his different living circumstances, strongly reflected to his interal statement .This paper analyzes Su Shi's life stages, calligraphy creations and literature works, through the description of Su Shi's life experience, the alteration of Su Shi's mood, and then the sincere feeling buried deeply in his heart by Su Shi's calligraphy works. Finally, Tongpo poetry was used to intuitively prove what Su Shi thought indeedly.

## 1. Introduction

Su Shi, also called Su Tongpo, is a famous calligrapher, literator and politician in the Northern Song Dynasty, who occupied a very important position in the history of Chinese literature and art. Su Shi's literary creations, especially poetry has a deep influence on future generations. Su Shi pioneered the bold and unrestrained school in poetry in Song Dynasty, and put forward the theory of "make poetry poet" to enhance poetry to the same status as the general poem.

Su Shi's calligraphy is also of great significance, which is called one of "the four representatives of the Northern Song Dynasty". Su Tongpo absorbed the calligraphy advantages of Wang Xizhi, Yan Zhenqing and others, and added his own character and opinion, interested in the end of the pen. Su Shi's famous calligraphy articles, such as "Huangzhou Hanshi Festival", "Dongting Spring View" and so on, showed Su Shi's spiritual charm in both content and writing.

Su Shi's life had gone through three periods [1], which was divided according to the ups and downs in his officialdom, from the beginning of his official career to the death far from his hometown, so that Su Shi's artistic and literary style had changed from the early ambition to transcendence, to keeping calm mind of fame and fortune, which addressed that Su Shi's style of "conveying emotion by Work".

This paper will analyze Tongpo's poetry by his calligraphy, so that Su Shi's art style can be known thoroughly.

## 2. Scope and Background of Research

Su Shi was born into a landlord family in Meishan County, Sichuan Province. His intelligent talents and his parents' good education made Su Shi outstanding in his studies since he was a child. In the first year of Jiayou era, Su Shi went to the capital with his father to take the examination. His article was appreciated by Ouyang Xiu, the examiner at that time. Ouyang Xiu had a very high evaluation of Su Shi: "I should give in to this man and make it get ahead." [2] Ouyang Xiu's praise made Su Shi quickly become famous, and was full of ambition at this time. In September of the second year of Zhiping era, Su Shi wrote his first calligraphy work called Baoyue Tie, which was only 42 words. Su Shi had not yet had a famous poem, but his article had shown the characteristics of clear, profound and concise.

Returning from Su Xun's funeral, the new party became more powerful than before, and Su Shi was demoted once and once again. Firstly, he was expelled to Mizhou, and then to Huzhou. Su Shi's "Monument of loyalty", written in Huzhou, is an affirmation of Zhao Bian's view of loyalty, which expressed that his belief in Confucius had not faded at that time.

Su Shi, who asked to leave the capital spontaneously, did not expect that even if he was far from

the center of the regime, he was still threatened by his opposition. They rumored by sheer fabrication of his poetry that Su Shi plotted to rebel from his poetry, successfully banished him to the remote area in Huangzhou. Su Shi's life in Huangzhou is poor but contented. Getting rid of the numerous official duties, Su Shi began to farm and made couples of friends to travel. The shortage of material life was compensated by the enrichment of the spiritual world. During the Huangzhou period, Su Shi wrote a large number of poetry articles and calligraphy works like Huangzhou Hanshi Festival. Su Shi was happy in suffering, gradually formed his own creative style, and optimism in poetry works. His words broke up the prevailing style of poetry and his thoughts became deep and full of Zen, when Su Shi had become calm and elegant.

After his political enemies' institution had collapsed, Su Shi was asked to return to court and rewarded a high-level position. Hence, the heavy work of government affairs made the decrease of literary works, but the positive emotion in the poetry works. Su Shi's calligraphy works in the same period also revealed the same atmosphere, achieved the style, "conveying emotion by Work".

The ups and downs of his career made Su Shi have his own understanding of life, which made Su Shi be able to occupy a high position without pride, a low position without mourning. The change of mood made Su Shi's poetry works full of emotion and calligraphy works pursue emotional expressions, but behind this, it also reflected Su Shi's more peaceful state of mind, which indicated that Su Shi's creation had reached the golden age.

Soon the change of the supreme rule of the court made Su Shi lose power again. The emperor's dissatisfaction with Su Shi and the siege of the new party led Su Shi to be demoted again to Danzhou. Although Su Shi had experienced a smooth period by this time, he accepted the final challenge given to him by fate. Su Shi wrote Dongting Spring View and Zhongshan Scenery After Rainfall. Su Shi had been poor and ill, but his enthusiasm for creation was getting higher and higher. The content of poetry works was no longer limited to talking about ancient times but focused on describing emotion by scenery.

As the last period of life, Su Shi had climbed to a new peak, and his calligraphy and literatural works jumped out of the original framework and really went as they were at will, and made "writing feelings" to the extreme. This is the established period of Su Shi's "conveying emotion by Work" style on creation finally.

There are many kinds of calligraphy works by Su Shi, involved regular script, semi-cursive script, cursive script. Su Shi's calligraphy creation stages coincide with his life stages. Since many works had lost, now Su Shi's extant calligraphy works are mainly written in semi-cursive, which was same as what Su Shi was expert in.

Su Shi had put forward his motto on calligraphy-- "three dos and three don'ts": firstly, do not write without construction, learn how to use the writing brush; second, do not straight forward and down, learn to master the rhythm; third, do not dip in ink only once, learn to adjust the color. [3] Generally speaking, most people, who are good at semi-cursive scripts, have a broad mind and a long-term stable state of mind, at the same time, they must also be a gentleman who acts following his heart but always obey morality. Although Su Shi's state of mind had changed with the fluctuation of his life, optimism and calmness had always been Su Shi's leading attitude.

Another kind of calligraphy existing in different stages of Su Shi's life was regular script, classified with regular script in big characters and in small characters. [4] Su Shi believed that the difference between them devoted to their different structures and layouts, that was, to ensure that no matter the font size, there remained room but without being empty. Su Shi was good at making friends, and his long and peaceful state of mind enabled him to make friends of different origins, breaking the bias of class, which could be proved by Su Shi's expertise in writing regular script in small characters. Regular script emphasized the degree of regulation, cares for the etiquette and law. When writing horizontal and vertical, did not transfer redundant pen front, just stood for loyal people or gentleman believing in Confucian, who could balance their own profits and faith, just like Su Shi.

Su Shi's cursive works largely appeared in the period of being demoted to Huangzhou, when Su Shi was experiencing the first great setback in his political life, the poor living situation, the

alienation of the emperor's opposition party, and the leave among friends and relatives, all of which made Su Shi feel depressed. In order to relieve his interior frustration, Su Shi sent his feelings on his pen and used cursive writing to express his feelings. Cursive script has no limited rules, offering ample room for writer to convey his moods. Su Shi's cursive scripts were different from predecessors' and is a pure feeling from the bottom of his heart. Su Shi believed that the essence of cursive script lied in the inner feelings naturally revealed by human beings, and it was the best way to achieve "conveying emotion by work". Su Shi urged to get rid of his sad mood, he were supposed to find a breakthrough, and cursive script could play such a role in solving his thousands of sorrows. Distinguished from his semi-cursive and regular script written on purpose, his cursive script is only the cry of his mind after he waked up from hangover, when his mood is the most obvious. [5] It could be seen that Su Shi went through the most restless period in his life during the Huangzhou period, but pursued calmness from himself ultimately, particularly exposed to his calligraphy called "back to garden".

Su Shi had formed his unique writing style, that used the side strokes to display his spirit, inclined to show the strokes, long straight strokes and overlapping strokes. [6] Su Shi's earliest work "Baoyue Tie" was only 42 words, though the calligraphy had completed in his early time, it enabled to intuitively accord with Su Shi's writing character--ignored law, but kept the peaceful and free state of mind at that time. The situation was same to or highlighted in "Huangzhou Hanshi Festival", known as the third greatest semi-cursive script among the world, which was written in the darkest period when Su Shi was demoted to Huangzhou. At that time, Su Shi's state of mind had changed dramatically in that it was the first time he had been abandoned out of authority. In the duration of that time, Su Shi recalled the childhood memory which influenced by his mother, he began to turn to embrace quietness from Buddhism. Had not indulged to the negative view on Buddhist thoughts, Su Shi chose to stick to Confucianism to guide his career and manners. However, the immersion in officialdom for nearly a decade had made Su Shi change his original mind. In Huangzhou, Su Shi began to look for the sustenance of the soul. Undoubtedly, the Buddhist thought he contacted when he was a child and Taoism gradually took up the largest part in his outlook of life, mentally Buddhism and naturally Confucianism had been granted to Su Shi's personal image.

Even though Su Shi suffered from unimaginable sorrow, he had found a way to transfer his mood for the time being. By that time Su Shi had begun to get used to writing on the side front. It meant that Su Shi was more free and no longer bound himself with the regulations of Confucianism's loyalty. Su Shi's overall strokes are smooth and natural, and it was inconsistent with the living situation he faced, which indicated that Su Shi had made a choice that in spite of his poor life, he had found another way out of his life, looking down fame and fortune like dust. Although Su Shi had sought relief from the pain of Buddha's old thought, his Confucian thought of helping the world for the people had not receded. When he was in Huangzhou, he was still concerned about the people's livelihood. All the change in his mind had the clear confirmation from the calligraphy work mentioned above.

Su Shi's calligraphy style in the later stage of his life was gradually precipitated by Su Shi last exploration, so he appeared sophisticated and stable in his writings. "Dongting Spring View" was created by Su Shi when Su Shi was quickly derogated from his high position. Su Shi, who has been crawling and rolling in the officialdom of the Song Dynasty for many years, had been accustomed to the ups and downs of the officialdom. Su Shi had realized that what he was looking for was not to sit firmly in the official position, but to do practical things for the people. He did not need to prove himself by obtaining high government officials and honors. Even if he is demoted in his last few years, Su Shi was no longer as emotional as he was in Huangzhou, but immediately used the Buddhist thought to purify himself, calm himself, and thus precipitate himself. Adhere to the original heart of Buddhism and Taoism to oneself, adhere to Confucian benevolence to the people, this was Su Shi's life to achieve the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.

No longer used to end with obvious strokes in his early life, Su Shi tended to adopt another way made the overall feeling of the word more round and full, the style of making good use of the side front had been stereotyped, the words were powerful. This was the final establishment of Su Shi's

view of life in the matter of benevolence and morality, and Su Shi's level of calligraphy and mood in literature were enhanced during this period. As a result, even though Su Shi was later demoted to the more remote place such as Huizhou, Danzhou, he was able to laugh at life and made friends with the local people. It was also the time that he had mentioned Cao Xi Zen many times in his literature when he was demoted to Huizhou. He had integrated the indifference of Zen and the retirement after achievement of Taoism. Had not fostered the negative avoidance effected by Buddhism, he had used the Zen and Zhuang Zi's thought but lived on the Confucian philosophy with a positive attitude to the world, expressing his mind from the tip of the writing brush.

The "work" in "conveying emotion by work" is generally entitled to calligraphy works, in that calligraphy works are the most direct product of the expose to writer's personality and mentality. However, many of Su Shi's calligraphy works are also the content of his poetry works, so Su Shi's style of poetry is changing with the style of calligraphy at the same time. Su Shi's poetry works directly confide or contain Su Shi's emotion, so the meaning of "work" in this article extends from calligraphy to artistic style, and since Su Shi's poetry works are very representative in calligraphy works, Su Shi's poetry works are regarded as an extension of "conveying emotion by work".

The "feeling" in "conveying emotion by work" is not only the writer's feeling at that time, but also contains the writer's character and attitude. Each stage of life may have different manifestations. The emotion expressed in the poetry works not only directly explains the writer's state of mind, but also contains the writer's outlook on life, so the meaning of "emotion" is far-reaching.

Su Shi's "work" are closely related to "emotion". The period of change on poetry styles and on calligraphy styles can be unified in the three stages of Su Shi's life, which is a further proof of "conveying emotion by work".

Su Shi, as a writer, had a great impact on the ancient literary field in the creation of poetry and prose. Among them, Su Shi's poetry works were the most prominent; meanwhile, Su Shi's put forward his poetry theory changed following his different life stages. In order to arise the position of poetry in the literature and separate it from poem, Su Shi also carried out the idea that poetry must be an independent form, its connotation includes that the pursuit of magnificent style and broad artistic conception, the features of poetry should be consistent with the character, [7] and the writing of words should express their true temperament and unique feelings of life like writing poems, which is the embodiment of Su Shi's thought of "conveying emotion by work" in poetry.

Su Shi stressed the relationship between regulations and skills in literary and artistic creations. Writers were required to grasp certain skills as tools if they wanted to express what they think truthfully. Su Shi's poetry is such a manifestation that he can show what he wanted at different stages of his life through poetry. However, his emotional expression is based on the examples of Liu Xiu and Yan Ling, through the method using ancient people to analogy to the nowadays people, to illustrate the feelings of the loyal statement to monarch and minister. Su Shi embodied his own feelings in the materials, so as to establish the connection between materials and people, consequently, the images in his works can be flesh and lively. For example, the images such as "lack of Moon, lonely wild goose" in his poetry called "Busuanzi ·Written in Huangzhou Dinghui Garden". As objects, not having any emotional meaning originally, were added Su Shi's subjective feelings according to their characteristics, the imperfect moon indicated separation, and the lonely goose represented the lonely state of mind, which coincided with the sadness expressed in "Huangzhou Hanshi Festival".

Zen thought had gradually gained the upper hand for the second stage of Su Shi's life. Su Shi brought out his theory, that is, jump out the old law, natural works are the best, which is the embodiment of Su Shi's spiritual Buddhism. Su Shi returned to the capital after a great fluctuation in his life. By that time, he had a deeper understanding of the spiritual practice advocated by Buddhists. Su Shi's works began to be full of natural Buddhist language. In "Man Ting Fang" he wrote, "when you go, the past of life are like smoke. Wait and see the autumn wind and the clean water when free. "Su Shi were willing to involve himself in the nature, quietly spent his life just like the autumn wind and clean water.

Su Shi's final stage of life was peaceful and unimpressed to power and money, he also attached

importance to the tranquil artistic realm. Taoism pursues “nothing is all beauty”. “Life is like a journey, I am also a passer-by.” Su Shi simply explained his outlook on life. After three ups and downs of life, bland is not only the most suitable understanding, but also the highest realm of art and literature. Su Shi's aesthetic style of poetry works experienced from strengthening the necessity of shape and spirit, to escape from form, and finally to reach nothing, which changed in terms of his mood step by step. Su Shi conveyed his inner feelings and understanding to the tips, attained to the realization of “conveying emotion by work”.

Su Shi pioneered the school of “Uninhibited Poetry” in Song poetry, broke the situation of slight spirit and narrow content of poetry since the Northern Song Dynasty, and fabulously improved the literary status of poetry. The content of Su's poetry was mixed, which thoroughly indicated the classification of the content of Su Shi's three stages of life.

Su Shi's poetry works were rich in content and involved many subjects, but at different nodes of his life, the emphasis on the content was also various. Su Shi's ci works in the first stage were mainly produced in the period in Hangzhou. He had not realized that his career was tough and hazardous, and the parties' conflicts brought about political discord had not caused him trouble at that time. Although Su Shi was not reconciled, he hoped to resolve this contradiction through his own departure. The mountains and rivers in the southern area of the Yangtze River made Su Shi temporarily get rid of the intrusion of official affairs. In the duration of that time, Su Shi looked through the landscape to send out different feelings, but whether the context is nostalgia, or laments that life is still an instant, the content is simple and full of true feelings, but still had not speak out the state of the heart frankly.

The four years in Huangzhou had hit the peak of Su Shi's creations and also turned out to be the transition period, which was inseparable for his mood change. Su Shi's bold and unrestrained style of poetry had formed when he was banished to Huangzhou. The style of Su's poetry had consisted of the content from the ancient to modern times, even including the universe philosophy. Although Su Shi was erudite, only by combining his knowledge with his particular personal experience could deepen bold and unrestrained degree in poetry. “Have picked time the cold branch also is unwilling to perch, put up with is willingly lonely and chill in the sandbar”. Su Shi compared himself to birds, noble and proud, revealed to his unwillingness from the state of his mind. “Better than a saddle I like sandals and cane. I'd fain, In a straw cloak, spend my life in mist and rain”. Blind complainment to the terrible life could not reflect Su Shi's broad mind, no matter where he travelled from, his words were always the expression of his state of mind. “Who says life cannot return to the juvenile period again? The running water in front of the door can still flow to the west. Do not sigh your grey hair but appreciate the young life”. Nearly 50 years old, Su Shi's loyalty obeying Confucianism had not faded due to the several times of relegation, he participated in civil life, attempting to understand people's actual situation, after putting aside utilitarian heart, Su Shi could better serve the people. When Su Shi had visited Chibi historical remains, he promoted his understanding of life. He thought that life seemed to a mayfly, and the bold and unrestrained attitude was the pursuit of the life of “travelling the universe with gods”, which was not affected by the worldly things, and Su Shi was attracted by the broadness of Taoism. The Taoist theory of complying with destiny made Su Shi's mood find a way to solve the depression, and the overall style of poetry works had changed simultaneously. Su Shi's poetry works, like his calligraphy, had become open and profound. The philosophical enhancement of his words, as well as the trend towards Buddhism and Taoism, the words of appreciation of the landscape during the tour have been meaningful from then on.

In the twilight years he was banished from the imperial court to the remote suburbs, thanks to the alteration in Huangzhou made him more comfortable than miserable. Since the Huangzhou period, Su Shi had eliminated the straightforward expression of his feelings, that is, the number of homesickness and farewell works had greatly decreased, replaced by the utilization of the mouth of materials to convey his hidden outlook on life. “Most willow catkins have been blown away, alas. But there is no place where grows not the sweet green grass. “Even though life was on the verge of disappearance like the willow, Su Shi was optimistically deemed that even at the end of life, there were still preparing charming scenery to appreciate. As far as the Song Dynasty people's

concerned, Hainan was so desolated that there remained no scenery to speak of, but as Su Shi faced the scenery in Hainan Island in the beginning of spring, he could depict his lively feelings on the paper smoothly. “As high as morning cloud you rise with grace. With pear flower you won’t share your dream”, a mourning represented Su Shi's yearning for Wang Chaoyun (his concubine), but it was different from the nightmare stimulated in the middle of the night that “We were apart in life and death for a decade. Trying not to think, but my memories of you never faded”, converted the sorrow in his heart into the emptiness “in Zen, the realm is more distant. During this period, Su Shi hid not only the strokes in calligraphy, but also the feelings in his poetry works, instead of obliterating his own feelings, but to endow his interior thoughts to everything existing in the world.

As the direct reflection on Su Shi's personality, the content of poetry works accompanies with the change of calligraphy, corroborated as the embodiment of “conveying emotion by work”, Su Shi's poetry works completely presented Su Shi's track of thoughts in his whole life.

### 3. Research Techniques

In order to find out different styles in Su Shi's calligraphy and poetry works, some charts are used to summary number of various topics on Su Shi's poetry in different living circumstances which can illustrate change directly.

Date	Travel	Recall	Friends talk	Pray at farewell	Sad thoughts
Beginnng of his official career	12	5	6	11	0
Exile and return to the capital	13	1	9	2	6
Banish again till his death	4	0	2	4	6

Chart.1. Classification of Su Shi's work[8]

### 4. Project Significance and Value

Liu Xizai born in Qing Dynasty commented that, “Tongpo's poetry type was quite like Du Fu's poem.” [9] Su Shi's rich content broke the shallow and vulgar expression in Hujian School in poetry, and entitle elegance to poetry rising its level, contained all his experience and thought in all his poetry works, so that the innovation enriched the theme of the poetry. Su Shi extricated himself from a few fixed tune titles in the old form, then furthered the titles after the effect on Liu Yong. Although Li Qingzhao once criticized Su Shi's poetry as “poem with irregular sentences”, Su Shi's poetry was harmonious in phonology, neat and sound in music overall. It was the same as the structure of calligraphy, both of them were the important means to show the inner feelings. The harmony of poetry works and the strokes of calligraphy were also important tools to elucidate the mood. As Liu Chenweng wrote in “Preface of Xin Qiji's poetry”: “poetry from Tongpo, was as poetry, as text, as marvellous spectacle among the world”. [10] Various themes made the status of poetry highly improved.

Huang Tingjian, one of the members of “Four Scholars of the Su Family”, sticking to creating works back to the simplicity in his grey age was influenced by Su Shi. Huang Tingjian firmly insisted that “the article was forbidden to follow others”, while it was necessary to give the article their own sincere feelings, which is the connotation of “conveying emotion by work”. Qin Guan and Chao Buzhi's poetry works could also convey emotional feelings. Qin Guan get the drift of Su Shi's theory most in the aspect of emotion transmission, integrating personal feelings into the words, making poetry gorgeous but not vulgar. In addition, Su Shi pioneered the bold and unrestrained poetry school, and offered Xin Qiji more instances, expanded the ideological connotation of the poetry.

The influence of “conveying emotion by work” on later generations was not only on poetry, but also on calligraphy. Su Shi's calligraphy studied Wang Xizhi and Yan Zhenqing initially, but finally integrated and formed his own style, with the addition of his own feelings. Su Shi's works were the bridges linking the readers or viewers to his heart, which Su Shi's “conveying emotion by work” style played a vital role.

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