

A Preliminary Study on the Trafficking in Women during the Great Famine in Shaanxi Province (1928-1930)

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Abstract

Based on the archives of Shaanxi during the Republic of China, including Shaanxi Yearbook and related reports, we try to restore the phenomenon of the trafficking in women during the Great Famine in Shaanxi province from 1928 to 1930. Trafficking in women and girl that means for the purpose of selling or exploiting, the main methods are abduction, kidnapping, fraud, transportation, transfer and so on. Compared with the Trafficked male, women are in a more tragic situation. In view of this situation, we will generalize the main ways and characteristics of the trafficking in women in Shaanxi during that period. On this basis, we will delve into the causes of this phenomenon, including political, economic, and cultural traditions. Then, describe in detail the harm caused by the phenomenon of trafficking. Finally, we summarize the social assistance activities and enlightenment at that time, like civil society organizations and official cooperation activities. In this great famine, the number of women being trafficked is shocking, their situation is tragic. Looking through the history books of ancient Chinese, there are many incidents of women being trafficked in famine. For example, Han Shu records that there was a great famine in the early Han Dynasty. At that time, the phenomenon of frequent purchases of women in the society was serious. We hope that through the study of the phenomenon of trafficking in women in the Great Famine in Shaanxi Province, we can further judge the impact of hunger factors in trafficking. At the same time, we hope it is helpful to solve to the problem of women's trafficking.

Introduction

In 1928, a major disaster swept across the northwest and north China, with Shaanxi as the center, and continued to expand outward, involving multiple provinces. The famine time has continued until 1930 (Li, 1994, p.45). During this period, the disaster in Shaanxi has intensified, causing huge casualties. According to Xia Mingfang's information on the number of disaster-stricken counties in Shaanxi Province during the three-year disaster, 84 counties were affected in 1928, 92 in 1929 and 76 in 1930

(Xia, 2000, p.376-377). Other relevant information shows that the number of people affected by disasters in Shaanxi Province reached 5,655,264 in 1928 (National Government Affairs Office, 1929, p.1-3 & 17-18). In 1929, the number of people affected by the disaster reached 7,015,052 (Li, 1993, p.2), an increase of 1,359,788 people; in 1930, the number of people affected by the disaster was 5,584,526 (ibid, p.265). According to incomplete statistics, the number of deaths in Shaanxi in the disaster was at least 3 million and the number of migrants was over 6 million (Li, 1994, p.175). In the famine, accompanied by a large number of people in exile, large-scale human trafficking, especially women's trafficking problems, the total number of women sold is more than 130,000 (Su & Wen, 2018), so the huge number of sales is shocking.

However, for a long time, the academic community has been relatively lacking in the issue of women's trafficking. Most of the research only briefly describes it as an auxiliary content of the disaster problem, pointing out the negative impact it brings (cf: Wen, 2007; Zhang, 2007; An, 2010); Some briefly introduce the basic situation of women's trafficking at that time (Wang, 2018). Some mentioned the rescue measures of some social assistance organizations at that time (Qin, 2012); on the whole, there is a lack of systematic, comprehensive and specialized discussion on women's trafficking in the famine, but a few studies have made breakthrough exploration. For example, *Study on the fate of women in disasters - centered on the Guanzhong area from 1928 to 1930*, a case study of the situation of Guanzhong women in the northwestern disasters, combining women's history research with the history of disasters, and analyzing women more deeply. The various behaviors, mentality, fate and other characteristics exhibited in the famine, in order to more fully show the changes in the living conditions of women at that time. His research is gender-conscious and strives to break through the research limitations of the independent development of research on the history of disasters and the study of women's history. It provides us with new ideas for studying the problem of women's trafficking in the famine and *A Probe into the Problem of Women's Trafficking in Shaanxi during the Great Disaster Period in the Northwest of the Republic of China (1928-1930)* provides a comprehensive and comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of women's trafficking in Shaanxi Province in the famine, and carefully researched various different expressions on the scale of women's trafficking, and finally obtained a relatively accurate number (Su & Wen, 2018), which supplemented previous research.

Taken together, there are limits. The former is based on the rural women in Guanzhong in the famine, and the discussion on trafficking in women is inevitably insufficient and there are some omissions. Although the latter is more comprehensive, the combination of the discussion of women's trafficking and the history of disasters seems to be less clear. Based on the above-mentioned various situations, this paper will start with the impact of famine on women's trafficking and draw on the research methods combining the history of women and the history of disasters, in order to

clarify the role of the famine in the trafficking of women in Shaanxi. I hope to add something. From the content point of view, it is mainly divided into the following three aspects: (1) to simply sort out the basic situation of Shaanxi women's trafficking in the famine, including background, time, etc.; (2) to analyze the characteristics and causes of women's trafficking in Shaanxi; (3) Briefly summarize the topic content reflected in the first two parts. From the research data used, it mainly includes relevant reports, papers, monographs, government reports, etc. of various newspapers and magazines during the Republic of China.

Basic situation of women's trafficking in Shaanxi in the famine

In 1928, the disasters swept the Shaanxi Province, the fields were ridiculous, and the sorrows and sorrows were everywhere. At that time, the disaster report of Shaanxi Province was described as " Years of drought, depletion of rivers, no harvest in the ground, people can only eat rice crust to fill their stomachs " (National Government Affairs Office, 1929). The situation is really fierce. As the disaster worsens, food is already insufficient. The victims had to choose another way out. "The victims began to eat bark and grass roots to fill their stomachs, and later had to sell their children to survive" (Wu, 1935, p.1826). So, they chose to sell women at home to get food, and for short-term survival, women's trafficking activities slowly Prosperous. According to relevant papers, the number of women trafficked in the disaster has exceeded 130,000 (Su & Wen, 2018). In the large-scale women's trafficking, a fixed market for human trafficking is established. At the beginning, the selling price was low. The "Declaration" once reported that "Yabai Town under the jurisdiction of Wugong County has a market for buying and selling people. The highest price for women can be sold for eight yuan. Most other counties are also like this" (National Government Affairs Office, 1929). As for the selling price of the women who are sold, the age is the standard. For example, one news in "*Da Gong Bao*" mentions that "In the winter of Shaanxi Province in the past 21 years, a market for buying and selling people was established. As long as they are young girls in Wugong and Jixian, they are buying and selling here. Women over the age of 13 can sell for 10 yuan; those under 10 can sell for several yuan" (Ta Kung Pao, February 3, 1993); For example, "Young women in their twenties can sell eight yuan, the most beautiful, the highest price is no more than ten yuan, the average woman sells eight yuan, and the common woman sells three or four yuan" (He, 2004). Gradually, after the sale, the price rose, and the traffickers profited a lot. "Human traffickers are all in the name of adopting a righteous woman. They pay a few yuan and sell them to Shanxi Henan for sale. They can get a heavy price" ("Shaanxi disaster", 1929). As such, the incident of trafficking in women in Shaanxi in the famine is huge and difficult to contain.

Fate and characteristics

As mentioned above, the famine in Shaanxi is so serious that the fate of Shaanxi

women is undoubtedly tragic, and the overall outcome can be roughly divided into four categories. The first category is because there is no food to eat, to replace it with something else, and eventually lead to poisoning or indigestion and die. It has been reported that “After the victims ate all grass roots and tree bark, they could only eat the soil. Many people died because of poisoning and indigestion” (Ta Kung Pao, August 30, 1930). The second category is to become "food" among other victims. “Because of the hunger, the victims can only eat human flesh. They started stealing bodies, then cut the meat of the people, and finally put the legs of the baby and the women in the baggage. The tax bureaus often pull out the human leg when they check the baggage” (Ta Kung Pao, July 27, 1930). As a vulnerable group, women and children can easily become "victims". The third category is to go to die with their families, reports that “The people of Wugong County and other places can only choose to seek death because they cannot get full food. Some of them choose to jump in the river. Some people choose to hang” (Ta Kung Pao, October 25, 1929). The fourth category is to become a "flowing people". “For example, the number of refugees in Wugong County accounted for 68% of the total number, and Fufeng County also accounted for 50% of the total” (Feng, 1993). The fifth category is to become a "commodity" that is being sold. Here can be divided into two situations, one is "sold" by the family or sold voluntarily, such as “The number of victims was 3.34 million. The farmers ate the seeds, sold the farm tools, demolished the houses and sold their wives and daughters, each selling an average of 12 yuan” (Hongqi, September 30, 1933). The other is being trafficked.

Indeed, the fate of women who are trafficked is tragic. They must not only suffer from the hunger of famine, but also face the breakdown of their families and the pain of their hometowns. Luck is sold to Shanxi and other places for a good wife, and bad luck becomes awkward. For example, Qin Hanzhang's article *Northwest China's famine problem* mentioned “Most women in Shaanxi are sold to the wife of Shanxi. Being a wife is still lucky. The most unfortunate thing is to sell to Zhili County to be a prostitute” (Qin, 1930). And *Zhu Shiyan* mentioned that “Most of the women in the Guanzhong area were sold to Xi'an, Shanxi, Hebei, Peiping and Shanghai as prostitutes” (Zhu, 1931). In addition, a large number of women in Shaanxi were trafficked, and to a certain extent, they also caused Shaanxi. The imbalance between male and female is not conducive to the elimination of the marriage trading system after the disaster. However, compared with the fate of the first four categories, it is a good choice to obtain short-term survival by being trafficked. Whether it is trafficked women, family members, traffickers, and buyers of trafficked women, they have received more or less benefits in this transaction.

For the trafficked women and their families, sacrificing women can be exchanged for short-term preservation of the family. In the case of traffickers, great profits have been earned through trafficking in women. For example, “Xingping, Wugong, Liquan, Fufeng, Fengxiang, Suiwu, Exian and other places, set up a market for buying and selling people. The husband took his wife and children to the market and traffickers

for trade activities. Thus, the traders have made a lot of profits” (Tai Dong Daily, May 24, 1930). Just pay a few dollars for the cost of buying, and sell it, but can get dozens of times of income, its huge profits are self-evident. In the case of the buyer, the purchased women can be used to carry out the ancestors to improve the imbalance of the population. Take Shanxi as an example. “According to the statistics of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the end of the Qing Dynasty, the most unbalanced sex ratio in the 22 provinces of the first year of Xuanton is in Shanxi Province” (Jiao & Su, 2002, p.153); and Qiao Qiming's *Analysis and Research on the Population Problems in Shanxi* mentioned that” Probably Shanxi Province has a temperament to kill girls. The number of women who are married is therefore lacking, and the price of ordinary adult women varies from one to two hundred dollars to three hundred dollars, depending on their appearance. The value of women is so vast that young people in the middle and lower classes generally regard women as not easy to obtain, and because of limited funds, they often choose to buy women from other places” (Qiao, 1931). The value of women is such a huge, so generally young people below the middle level regard women as a rare gift and save money.

Judging from the above content, both the buyer and the seller have received certain compensation. In an unstable social environment such as famine, women’s abduction to some extent solves the problem of imbalance in the proportion of the population. It can be regarded as a kind of resource reconfiguration in a special case. If it is regarded as a self-adjustment of society and Repair, we can rise from the simple sympathy and compassion of the abducted women to the socially disadvantaged groups will be the most harmed when the social structure and mechanism are disordered under objective reasons. As mentioned above, the total number of women sold in Shaanxi in this disaster has exceeded 130,000. Such a large number of sales show the embarrassment of the phenomenon of trafficking. Why was the human trafficking at that time so embarrassing?

The reasons for the trafficking of women in Shaanxi during the disaster

The above section mentioned that in the trafficking of women, the traffickers have obtained huge profits, which is the fundamental motivation for the traffickers to engage in human trafficking. However, trafficking in women is a criminal act at the legal level. In society, it is a bad act against social morality. The government and the society should reasonably oppose and stop it. Why did the phenomenon of women being trafficked in this famine become more serious? How does the government and society view this phenomenon?

"In May 1930, Feng Yuxiang issued the "Human Trafficking Injunction" in the names of Lu Hai Air Force Deputy Commander in Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai and Ningxia, strictly prohibiting selling human beings, detaining and repatriating the sold population, setting up shelters for the victims” (Su & Wen, 1931). The government issued relevant laws and regulations on the issue of women’s trafficking. However, after careful

analysis, it was found that the punishment measures for traffickers were unclear and in the process of implementation. The decree may become a piece of paper, and even the situation of collusion between the government and the traffickers. This phenomenon was mentioned in a report by the right-hander in Nanjing. " In the two years, the children and women sold from Shaanxi Province to Shanxi, the number of people who can find the number reached more than 400,000. In addition to the Shaanxi government's tax collection, the Shanxi government receives five yuan each and collects nearly two million yuan. This is like the Shaanxi government selling women to the Shanxi government" (Yu, 1930). For traffickers, the lack of government work has greatly reduced the cost of crime and directly stimulated the increase in trafficking in women. Returning to the women who are being trafficked, we should first think about how these trafficked women are being trafficked in the famine? Where is the source?

At its roots, the disaster was severe in three years, and the victims had no food to eat. Some women are sold to obtain silver money or food for family preservation, and some are turned into refugees, becoming an outside population of society, threatening the maintenance of normal social order. These two are the main sources of trafficking in women. It has been reported that Xi'an "Hungry people can't survive in their hometown, so they take their families to live elsewhere. The peasants living in the mountains fled to the north and the south, and some people came to the provincial capitals, so the number of people in Xi'an continued to increase. These hungry people beg on the street during the day and sleep on the street at night. The cold wind came, their screams continued, and the people they heard felt heartbroken. (Xinghua Weekly, March 22, 1933). Among the hungry people in the province, women account for eight out of ten, all from the western county, without a home, and their parents have died" (Xiamen University Library clippings, 1917-43).

From this point of view, to solve the problem of women's trafficking, we must start from solving the disaster. If the disaster is alleviated, the problem of women's trafficking will certainly be resolved. However, there are indications that in this famine, the government does not seem to play a normal social management function. The key to disaster relief is to remedy the disaster. Some of them need to let the people grow more food, and the other part needs government relief. However, the two parts of the content, the government does not seem to be doing well. On the one hand, farmers urgently need farmland to grow food. On the other hand, the government has increased various kinds of taxation and land grants. "In the early years of the Republic of China, the various taxes in the city were only \$69000 a year. In 1931, it reached 740,000 yuan, an increase of 11 times" (Zhang, 1957, p.113). In the case of land price collapse, the wealthy businessmen took the opportunity to purchase, such as the drought in Shaanxi. The land price is usually 30 yuan per mu, now only five or six yuan. Shaanxi...the poor peasants, even the well-off homes, has changed the industry cheaply to save their lives because of the "disaster". On the contrary, the local businessmen are inferior to the wealthy businessmen, and they are more likely

to use the "disaster" to manipulate the money" (Deng, 1937, p.140-141). "In addition, there are cases where farmers are forced to take crops as collateral to obtain farming capital. When farmers need capital, they will order the crops in their fields to the rich. If the market price per stone is 20 yuan, then the scheduled wheat, only 12 or 3 yuan per stone, will be delivered at the time of harvest. This type of pre-sale method is the most" (Feng, 1933, p.799). In addition, there are cases of insufficient production due to opium cultivation. "Due to excessive land area for cotton and opium cultivation, the area for planting food is insufficient" (Jing, 1930, pp.49-50).

In terms of disaster relief, the results are not satisfactory. After the disaster occurred, the government implemented funding and set up porridge factory measures. After the drought in 1928, Shaanxi Province established a provincial council. In the autumn of the same year, the provincial and municipal governments built a folk paradise in the north of Zhongshan Road. In September, Shaanxi received a loan of 45,000 yuan. In 1929, the Shaanxi disaster was seriously affected. Feng Yuxiang, chairman of the Henan, Shaanxi and Gansu Disaster Committee, asked the National Government to allocate funds. He said that "the drought is more severe than before, and a province in Shaanxi must ask for at least 6 million yuan of disaster relief bonds. *Shaanxi Provincial Disaster Relief Committee* said, "As of the end of February 1929, the province had distributed a total of more than 1.12 million yuan. In addition, Shaanxi Provincial Health Council will open a rice field in the city of Xiacheng and Xiangzimiao Street in Xi'an City to help the victims. The porridge factory shelters were handled with various charities, and 66,500 people were accommodated. Chang'an County has porridge factories in 8 towns such as Guodu Town and Dayan Pagoda. There are 2,200,000 porridge-stricken people, and there are 2 shelters and more than 1,200 people. Lantian County set up a porridge factory to help the peasants, and build roads with workers" (Xiaoi & Lv, 2007).

However, in the specific implementation process, there have been reliefs, deductions of food and money. *The Shanghai Republic of China Daily* said that the government does not want to help the victims, but instead confuses the food and money of the disaster, but also increases taxes; it also interferes with the relief work of social relief groups. *The Shaanxi Provincial Health Council* said that "In Fengtai, the car that specializes in transporting food was detained. The car that came to Baoding was detained again. The same incident occurred in Xuzhou. Other places such as Shaanxi and Henan also had the same report" ("*Compilation of Chinese Modern Political History Materials*", n.d.). In this case, the foreign aid organizations at that time were also "obsessed". *The American Red Cross Society* thought that the disaster was artificial and refused to help. The disaster situation cannot be effectively controlled, and the problem of the refugees cannot be properly solved. The disorder of the government function displayed behind the disaster has become a hotbed for women to sell.

Status of women under the traditional social concept

After answering the two questions about the causes and sources of women being trafficked in the famine, it is time to think about why the subject being trafficked is a woman. As mentioned above, some women have been bought to become wives and become "tools" for male ancestors. This is an important reason for trafficking in women. In addition, being sold as a shackle for entertainment is also an important reason. Behind these reasons all reflect the same social concept that women's social status is low, subordinate to family and men. When the famine occurred, they often became the first to be sacrificed. At that time, many songs in the disasters in Shaanxi reflected this phenomenon, such as "Green stone, ringing, my dad sells me" (Gao, 1931, p.2). Another example is "Selling Wife". "Without rice and noodles, life is hard to do. Sorghum noodles brushed the wall. Called a village chief, I want to sell my wife, do not teach me to sell my wife? It is impossible" (Huo, 2006, pp.992-993). They are sold as goods, which can be said to be the connivance of people under the influence of traditional social concepts to safeguard their own interests.

In general, this three-year disaster has undoubtedly aggravated the phenomenon of women's trafficking in Shaanxi. Under the unstable social environment, the government's social management disorder, coupled with the influence of traditional social concepts, has made women often become victims. The first party to be sacrificed, but it is undeniable that even in this unstable environment, society still has certain regulatory functions, which invisibly cause certain materials to be redistributed, such as women's trafficking activities to a certain extent. It has solved the imbalance of the proportion of the population in some areas and has also made some people gain short-term survival in the famine.

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