

Research on the Disaster Situation and Response in Linfen County during the "Ding Wu Qi Huang" Period—Based on the Records in the Guangxu Edition of the Linfen County Annals

Han Congcong

Marxism College, Xinjiang Hotan University, Hotan, 848000, Xinjiang, China
Hancongcong8590@163.com

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Abstract: The "Dingwu Strange Famine" was a major disaster that occurred in the early years of the Guangxu reign in North China, with Shanxi being one of the provinces most severely affected by the disaster. Due to natural reasons, Linfen County in Shanxi Province has experienced years of famine and drought, as well as the impact of the Xiantong War and the lack of awareness of disaster prevention, resulting in a major disaster and the loss of about 58% of the population during the famine period. During the famine period, Linfen County presented a model dominated by the government, actively participated by local gentry, and jointly intervened by Western missionary groups in disaster relief, which opened the way for modernization in the traditional Chinese disaster relief model. From the perspective of disaster relief in Linfen County, it can provide useful reference for us to explore the common characteristics of disaster prevention and relief measures in Shanxi Province, and also provide corresponding experience and lessons for our current disaster prevention and relief measures.

1. Introduction

There are abundant works and papers in the field of historical research on the "Ding Wu Qi Huang", which specifically involve academic research on Linfen County during the "Ding Wu Qi Huang" period. The main works include Tian Li's "The Disaster and Relief Work of Pingyang Prefecture in the "Ding Wu Qi Huang "- A Study Based on Steles and Local Chronicles" and Yuan Kexin's "Disaster and Society - A Study Centered on Linfen's" Ding Wu Qi Huang ". The former studies the disaster and relief work of Pingyang Prefecture, including Linfen County, from the perspective of steles and local chronicles, while the latter takes Linfen County as the research point and uses various historical materials to study natural disasters such as drought, plague, wolf plague, and rat infestation during the "Ding Wu Qi Huang "period. Provide a detailed description to demonstrate the intensity of this disaster and further reveal the serious harm caused by the Ding Wu famine to the Linfen area. However, some of these research results examine the harmfulness of the Dingwu Qihuang from the perspective of Shanxi Province, and there is a lack of research on the causes of disasters and disaster relief measures in a certain local area; Some focus on describing the

impact of disasters on grassroots society at that time, and research on the individual characteristics of local areas, such as the situation, reasons, and corresponding disaster relief measures, is not in-depth enough. Therefore, this article takes the Guangxu edition of "Linfen County Annals" as the center to systematically sort out the disaster situation and disaster relief situation in Linfen County, Shanxi Province during the Ding Wuqi famine period, and deeply explore the causes and disaster relief measures behind the famine, in order to benefit our anti disaster and relief work today.

2. Overview of the disaster situation in Linfen County

Linfen, also known as Pingyang, Woniu City, and Huaguo City. Since the second year of the Guangxu reign (1876), Shanxi Province has experienced a prolonged drought, with poor or even no harvest, widespread hunger, and even "the third and fourth years of the Guangxu reign were plagued by severe droughts"[1]This is the historical "Ding Wu Qi Huang". According to the Guangxu edition of the "Shanxi Tongzhi", "The relief books provided relief to about four million hungry people of all sizes, and their deaths cannot be accounted for. The accounts are checked against each other, and the total number is not less than ten million, which is truly unprecedented in ancient times.[2]Zeng Guoquan also recorded, "Inquire with the elders, it is said to be a disaster that has not been seen in over two hundred years.[3]The consequences of this disaster were particularly severe in areas such as Linfen County. According to records, "from Qin, Yu, to Jin, it was early in the morning, and the disaster in Jin was severe. Except for a slight harvest along the way to Shangdang, more than 80 states and counties reported the disaster, with Pingyang being particularly severe.[4]

In the Guangxu edition of the "Linfen County Annals," the impact of disasters and famines on Linfen County is described as follows: "In the first year of Guangxu, there was a drought; in the second year, there was a severe drought and famine, and people ate bark, grass roots, dry mud, and other materials; in the third year, people ate each other, and the stars and sparks were bright, and the color began to fade from March to May of the fourth year; in the fourth year, people ate each other, and the land was red for thousands of miles. Hungry children thrived in the wild, and epidemics were rampant, resulting in more than half of the deaths. On the second day of February, they fainted in two ears; in the fifth year, in May, during the Taibai Festival, autumn mice were a disaster, and there were many wolves, three or five groups of people, and the daytime began to devour Especially in Dongxiang.[5]From this, we can see that in the face of the invasion of famine, Linfen County has been ravaged by thousands of miles of land, with scenes of widespread hunger and even cannibalism, and even serious consequences such as rodent and wolf disasters. It can be seen that this famine has caused catastrophic damage to the social order of Linfen County. On the other hand, the most obvious damage caused by disasters is the severe loss of population in the Linfen area. According to the Guangxu edition of the "Linfen County Annals," the census population data in the first year of Guangxu showed "47292 households, with 94570 males and females in the big mouth and 79988 in the small mouth.[6]In the population census conducted in the fifth year of Guangxu (1879) after the disaster, there were 28390 households, with 4977 men and women in the big mouth and 33574 in the small mouth.[7]Through data comparison, we can see that nearly half of the population in Linfen County lost during the disaster period, with a population reduction of about 58%. The massive loss of population has led to a shortage of labor resources for agricultural production in Linfen County, resulting in a large amount of land resources being abandoned, which invisibly further exacerbates the disaster faced by Linfen County, demonstrating the destructive power of this disaster.

3. The causes of the disaster in Linfen County

3.1 Natural causes

This great drought began in the first year of Guangxu (1875). This year, there was still little rainfall from spring until winter. At the same time, Shanxi and other provinces experienced severe drought conditions after the autumn of that year, resulting in crop failures and major disasters throughout Shanxi province. As Zeng Guoquan once said, "The drought has become a phenomenon, and it is unimaginable for households in the northern five provinces to cover up and store it". [8] This indicates that when the famine first appeared, it did not receive enough attention from the local people in Linfen, which led to their prevention. Drought is caused by long-term high temperatures and lack of rainfall. Changes in climate conditions are the most direct cause of drought, while changes in the natural ecological environment and inadequate drought prevention measures may also exacerbate drought.[9]If the natural drought situation had eased at this time, the situation in Shanxi Province would not have fallen into a catastrophic state. But with the further spread of the drought situation, it eventually triggered a catastrophic avalanche chain reaction. In the second year of Emperor Guangxu's reign, droughts in various regions intensified, and a severe drought and famine began to break out in Linfen. The "Hurting the Fields" written by the people at that time reflected the drought situation during this period: "Sowing grains and valleys was not completed, and I hoped that there would be no rain every day. Dianyí called out to cultivate young seedlings, and every seedling was swaying in the wind. After enduring countless hardships and hardships, I waited for autumn to harvest, and every grain was harvested until its heart and bones were scorched.[10]This indicates that during this period, ordinary people were already affected by drought and lack of rainfall after sowing crops, but the harvest season that should have been harvested in autumn disappointed and even worried the lower class people greatly; In the third year of Emperor Guangxu's reign, "Shanxi was plagued by drought everywhere, including Pingpu, Jie, Jiang, Huo, and Xi, with a thousand miles of red land, followed by Tai, Fen, Ze, Lu, Qin, and Liao. Meng and Shou were hit by hail, while the northern part of the province was hit by frost... More than 80 areas were severely affected by the disaster, with no less than four to five million people registered as hungry... and fifteen or six people died of hunger, leaving no villages left behind." "Jin Province suffered from frequent droughts... the red land was over a thousand miles long, and there were as many as five to six million hungry people. Great disasters were unprecedented in ancient times. [11] On the land of Shanxi, in the dry and barren fields, not a single blade of grass grows. There is a folk song that goes, 'In the third year of Guangxu's reign, half of the people died.'; In the fourth year of the Guangxu reign, there was no rain in May and June, and the people were in chaos. There were no green seedlings or grass drying up everywhere. It was even more lamentable that there was no rain in July and August, and the people were all worried. It can be seen that the continuous drought has led to a lack of rainfall in the fields of many farmers, which has also delayed the growth of crops during the farming season, causing panic and helplessness among the people. It is under the influence of continuous drought caused by natural factors that the crop harvest in Linfen County has been devastated.

3.2 The destructive factors of the Xiantong War

The destruction caused by the Xiantong War in Linfen County has led to the decline and destruction of the civilian population, resulting in weak disaster prevention and control capabilities. This is the direct factor leading to the severe famine situation in Linfen County. Linfen is a tributary of Pingyang. Since the wars of Guichou in Xianfeng and Dingmao in Tongzhi, the people have been in decline. Therefore, this drought is even more severe than elsewhere. In the third year of the

Xianfeng reign of the Qing Dynasty (1853), Lin Fengxiang, a member of the Northern Expeditionary Army of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, entered the county through Quwo and stationed troops in the ancient city and Jing'an area. They also sent troops to capture Xiangling County and directly advanced to Pingyang. After the Taiping Army attacked Linfen County, "the bandits burned down the Wumiao Temple and plundered extensively. Because the merchants defended the city, they hated the merchants and burned down the street market. In an instant, they were all reduced to ashes. The thief returned to the city, fueled by anger, slaughtered the county city, and registered the deceased merchants and civilians. After the Taiping Rebellion, the social order in Linfen was greatly disrupted; However, before the social recovery of Linfen could be achieved, it was once again hit by the rebellion of the Nian army. In October of the sixth year of the Tongzhi reign (1867), the leader of the Nian army, Zhang Zongyu, gathered more than 100000 people and occupied Yichuan and Yanchuan in Shaanxi, repeatedly attacking the river mouth and then advancing to plunder Linfen. "The bandits then drove away with a loud roar... The bandits were stationed in villages, stretching for dozens of miles from south to north. They plundered extensively during the day and set fire at night, causing the people to flee and hide, and the suffering was unbearable. After the attack of the Nian army, the grassroots society in Linfen has once again suffered serious damage, with people's fields abandoned and abandoned, and their property plundered. But before the stability of the people could be achieved, the pursuit and suppression of the imperial army followed. More than 14000 soldiers from the Qing army, including Liu Songshan, Lao Xiang, and Guo Baochang, followed suit and plundered wherever they went, leaving the people struggling to make ends meet. On the one hand, the rebel army once 'burned and looted the houses and assets of wealthy families' in order to supplement food and supplies. In addition to sending military supplies on site, the Qing army also plundered extensively. Due to the large number of troops entering and leaving the territory, farmers had to flee in all directions to avoid the war, resulting in large areas of fertile land becoming barren and affecting the development of agricultural production. The plundering of the Nian army, coupled with the arbitrary distribution of the imperial army, further exacerbated the hardships of the people in Linfen.

4. Measures taken by Linfen County to cope with disasters

4.1 The Qing government led the fundraising of disaster relief food

Firstly, the Qing government deferred the collection of grain taxes that should have been paid by Shanxi for local disaster relief, while strictly ordering the Ministry of Revenue to liaise with Zeng Guoquan and provide maximum support in terms of silver and grain. The province is about to release 200000 taels of silver from the Beijing government this year, and Zeng Guoquan will instruct his subordinates to purchase grain and rice, and send personnel to investigate the severity of the disaster and provide relief accordingly. In the third and fourth years of the Guangxu reign (1877, 1878), facing the severe disaster in Shanxi, Zeng Guoquan actively purchased grain to alleviate the food shortage by using the deferred payment of silver. At the same time, he actively applied for the exemption of some Shanxi taxes, even to the greatest extent possible. "Duke Fu Xian Zeng Guoquan inspected the wasteland and requested permanent exemption of 11129925 silver coins, 325 stones of rice, 286 stones of beans,... Delaying the collection of new wasteland grain consumed 897224 silver coins, 6.59 cents, 185 stones of rice, 8 dou, 9 liters, 2 and 6 spoons, 21 stones of beans, 8 dou, 6 liters, 1 and 8 spoons. At the same time, Zeng Guoquan carefully planned and actively provided disaster relief based on the changes in the disaster situation in Shanxi Province, while also releasing disaster relief plans and issuing orders to the whole province. Deducting Beijing's salary, cutting off grain transport, and widely urging donations for relief... Yu Yun has successively published dozens of strategies for famine relief, and each department should follow

them. It can be seen that Zeng Guoquan stands at the height of disaster relief in the whole province, while raising and purchasing food, closely formulating detailed rules for disaster relief and issuing orders to the whole province, taking multiple measures to implement disaster relief.

Secondly, while Zeng Guoquan devoted himself to planning, the Qing government also increased its attention and relief efforts for the drought in Shanxi. In addition to the Qing government's efforts to raise funds for disaster relief, they also urgently transported grain to Shanxi to alleviate hunger and stabilize social order. In late August of the third year of Guangxu, the Qing government issued an edict stating, "This year, Shanxi is experiencing severe drought and suffering from severe disasters. Zeng Guoquan was granted permission to intercept 200000 taels of grain from the capital and ordered Li Hongzhang to raise 100000 taels of silver to assist in the relief efforts. In addition to intercepting the grain that was supposed to be transported to the capital for disaster relief, the Qing government also ordered the transportation of grain from other regions to Shanxi for disaster relief. In August of the third year of Guangxu (1877), the transportation of grain from Jiang'an was launched, and 40000 stones were intercepted. Li Hongzhang and Zeng Guoquan managed to transport the grain from Shanxi to meet the needs of relief. Not long after, the Qing government issued another edict to allocate a portion of the customs duties to Shanxi for disaster relief. The edict has been lowered, declaring that all the Ministry of Revenue will allocate 40% of the silver under the customs duties of 200000 taels, with 70% going to Shanxi and 30% going to Henan. Zeng Guoquan and Li Qingao quickly sent committee members to Beijing to lead the relief. Li Hongzhang raised 200000 taels of silver for coastal defense funds... He should give Shanxi 140000 taels of silver, which is 70%, as needed for purchasing relief food. Li Hongzhang supervised Ding Shouchang, Li Zhaotang and others to purchase and transport more grain and stones, and consulted Zeng Guoquan at any time to try to meet the demand. One stone of grain should be transported more in the total period, so that the Jin people could benefit more. One day's food. At this point, 40000 stones of rice from Jiang'an Canal have been intercepted... and will be transported by Commissioner Zeng Guoquan, who will distribute them to each member in order to expedite the process. It can be seen that the Qing government attached great importance to the relief of grain in Shanxi Province, reflecting the government's leading role.

Finally, when the Qing government actively raised funds for silver and food relief in Shanxi Province, it strictly ordered the local authorities not to enrich themselves, and at the same time, it strictly ordered local officials in Shanxi not to delay and to handle disaster relief matters as soon as possible. "If there is a lack of implementation or embezzlement to the point of being satisfied, it is necessary to strictly participate in the handling to deter greed. It is not allowed to show any foresight or favoritism. Now, we will handle the relief regulations and report to the authorities at the same time.

4.2 Linfen government and local gentry participate in donation and relief efforts

In terms of disaster relief, Linfen County has formed a good situation with government officials as the leading force and local gentry actively assisting in handling disaster relief affairs. During the drought in the third year of Guangxu (1877), Xu Rongshou, the Supervisor of the County, established a financial bureau with 18 gentry and businessmen. After Jiang Lian took over, he set up 7 scattered relief bureaus in suitable areas of the four townships. After meeting with him, he reviewed various books and found that the donations had already reached a certain amount, with about 30000 yuan for food relief for the poor. However, he was in great need of nourishment and faced difficulties. In addition to the old donations, he advised day and night and received a total of more than 41200 yuan in silver. It can be seen that since the famine in Linfen County, whether Xu Rongshou, the former Supervisor of the County, or Jiang Lian, the successor, have actively led the

disaster relief. At the same time, local gentry in Linfen have responded, actively participated in the government's disaster relief activities, and contributed to various affairs in the process of disaster relief. In April of the fifth year (1879), Sun Jun, the magistrate of Shanzuo Shanghe, praised Qing and ordered his attendant Shen Jun to release more than three thousand taels of gold. By August, gentlemen from Jiangsu and Zhejiang, such as Yan Zuolin, released more than ten thousand taels of silver and held a coffin for a long time to cover it up. When it comes to the aftermath, there is a great deal of urgency. In the winter of 1878, Jiang Lian, the then Supervisor of the County, also raised money and woven more than 2000 cotton padded clothes to distribute to hungry people everywhere. While actively providing disaster relief, we call on local gentry to work together to bury the remains.

4.3 Western missionaries participate in disaster relief efforts

Faced with the drought relief efforts in Linfen County, the missionary community in China actively participated in the relief work. Faced with the invasion of disasters, in the third year of the Guangxu reign (1877), missionaries De Ping'an and Lin Huisheng from the British "Inland Mission" (an organization formed in Britain in 1865 with the aim of spreading knowledge in Chinese mainland) came to Pingyang to preach under the pretext of investigating the disaster situation. The following year, De'an and Li Xiushan settled in the west wing of Tiefo Temple in Linfen City and began preaching under the guise of disaster relief. In 1878, David Hill and John Turner were sent to Pingyang Prefecture to distribute relief money and save the lives of many disaster victims.

Not only that, they have also held schools in disaster areas. In 1879, Li Xiushan bought a courtyard in Sanzhong Lane, Linfen City, which was used as a church and residence. The following year, he bought another courtyard in He'er Hutong as a church and school. These missionaries not only provided material assistance, but also spread Christian doctrine through essay writing activities, helping local people to come into contact with and accept new ideas. British Baptist pastor Timothy Richard was the most influential missionary in China during this period. He arrived in China via Korea in 1869 and "successively established missionary bases for the British Baptist Church in Shandong and Shanxi, and also provided relief in Shanxi to win over believers. He also paid attention to the issue of church autonomy and self-sufficiency, cultivating the backbone of Chinese believers.

The relief work carried out by Western missionary groups during the disaster relief period in Linfen County effectively cooperated with the active promotion of disaster relief by the Linfen County government and local gentry, ensuring the safety of many ordinary Linfen people and making extremely important contributions to the disaster prevention and relief work in Linfen County. It greatly alleviated the serious adverse effects of the disaster on Linfen County.

5. Conclusions

Looking at the disaster relief performance of various sectors in Linfen County, Shanxi Province during the "Ding Wu Qi Huang" period, we can see that officials, gentry and other groups in Linfen County have taken active measures to participate in disaster relief, fulfilled their responsibilities and obligations, and conscientiously completed disaster relief work based on the actual situation and overall interests of Linfen County. The main measures include the Linfen County Government actively raising relief food to aid disaster victims, government officials taking the lead, Linfen gentry actively participating in the allocation of food from various regions, and Western missionary groups actively providing disaster relief to expand religious influence. The most prominent point is that in the process of disaster relief, the government and private forces jointly participate, forming a disaster relief system that benefits both the government and the people. This system can not only

effectively respond to natural disasters, but also promote social development. Building such a system requires close cooperation between the government and private forces to jointly resist natural disasters. Although the effectiveness of these measures was not ideal, they promoted the "Western learning to the East" of modern charity concepts and the localization, scale, and standardization of traditional Chinese disaster relief models, providing us with useful references today.

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