

A Study of the Formation of Immigrants in Guxian, Shanxi Province, in the Late Qing Dynasty

Wu Zhenyu^a, Wang Xiaoli

Shanxi Normal University, Taiyuan, China
^aturbo_sfbp@163.com

Abstract: Traditional Chinese society was dominated by intensive agricultural production, and the farming-based population was sedentary for generations, making sedentary living a social norm. Conversely, when migration occurred, it was a "perverse" social phenomenon. At the end of the Qing dynasty, Guxian in Shanxi province was affected by disasters for many years and the local population declined sharply, which provided an opportunity for the Qing government to "reclaim the wasteland" and "attract people from the wasteland", and Guxian as an "incoming place" attracted this opened the door to a "new wave" of migration, attracting a large number of refugees from other provinces to claim the land. This paper uses the findings of the "population push-pull theory", combined with local literature, to further investigate the origins, timing and migration routes of migrants in Guxian, Shanxi Province, and to help further research into the dialects and cultural identities of migrants.

Keywords: the Late Qing Dynasty; Shanxi Province; Guxian; disaster migrants; Routes of Migration

1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese society was dominated by intensive agricultural production, and the farming-based population was sedentary for generations, making sedentary living a social norm. In contrast, when migration occurred, it was a "morbid" social phenomenon.^[1] *The Shihuo Zhi in Ming History* provides a detailed classification of this "morbid" social phenomenon. "The people who avoided the corvee were called *Taohu*, the people who migrated because of famine are known as *Liumin*, the people who move for other reasons are called *Fuji*, the people who move because of national policies are called *Yixi*."^[2] In his study of the history of migration in China, Mr. Ge Jianxiong points out that a migrant is a population that has moved from its original place of residence and has settled or lived there for a longer period of time, and that "anyone who has participated in this migration process is a member of this migration and has the status of a migrant."^[3] In short, migrants must meet three conditions: "a certain number of migrations", "a certain distance" and "a certain time".

Since the Ming Dynasty, Shanxi Province has been one of the major emigration areas, and Guxian in Linfen City was no exception. Thousands of people from Guxian left their hometowns in two baskets by the handful, and migrated to all directions. During the Qing Dynasty, the "Migrant Trends" intensified and its manifestation changed from the "disaster migration" of the Ming Dynasty to the "commercial migration".^[4] During the Qing Dynasty Famine Period, the population of Guxian declined sharply, which provided the Qing Government with the opportunity to "reclaim the wasteland" and "recruit people to the wasteland", attracting a large number of refugees from other provinces to claim the wasteland and opening the door to a "new wave" of immigration.

2. Reasons for Attracting Immigrants to Guxian

In the 1880s, the British demographer Ravenstein used the 1881 censuses of England and Wales to analyse the causes of population movements between the two regions and developed the "population push-pull theory". This theory suggests that there are two types of motivation for migration: there are forces in the place of residence that push people to move, and there are forces in the place of entry that attract people to move.^[5] This is probably the same reason why Guxian in the Shanxi Province attracted so many immigrants in the late Qing Dynasty.

2.1 Thrust Force

In Guxian, Shanxi Province, the foreign immigrants come from Shandong Province, Hebei Province and Henan Province, while the local immigrants come from Pingyao County and Changzhi City. The foreign immigrants are "disaster immigrants", while the local immigrants are "commercial immigrants". The long, frequent and numerous migrations of people from other provinces are widely distributed and concentrated in the southern part of Guxian County, Shanxi Province.

Changes in the natural environment were the basic driving force behind the migration of the population. In the spring of the second year of Guangxu in Qing Dynasty, there was a drought and famine in Laiwu, Shandong Province, and food prices soared, causing numerous people to flee from the famine.^[6] According to the April 16, 1877 issue of *The Shenbao*, twenty percent of a village in Laiwu City, Shandong Province died, sixty percent fled, and twenty percent became ill.^[7] In Linqu County, Shandong Province, people began to sell their wives and daughters elsewhere, according to *The Shenbao* of 11 July 1877.^[8] According to the *Wan Guo Gong Bao* of 1878, some tourists visiting Henan Province passed through villages where there were no curling smoke and nine out of ten houses were empty, and the people had mostly migrated to other places.^[9]

According to various newspapers, magazines and other documents, it can be seen that at the end of the Qing Dynasty, Shandong Province, Hebei Province and Henan Province were all hit by drought, locusts and pestilence to varying degrees, and in the face of continuous and severe natural disasters and secondary disasters, the local people were unable to withstand the natural calamities, and the land was barren and the people were poor.

2.2 Pulling Force

The main reason why Guxian in Shanxi Province was able to attract immigrants was because of the low population density after years of famine, coupled with the fact that local agricultural production could barely sustain the immigrants' livelihoods and that "if they wanted a stable life, they chose to live in the Yueyang Mountains", so there were more migrant villages spread across the southern part of Guxian in Shanxi Province.

According to surviving local records and historical documents, natural disasters of various sizes have occurred in various regions of Shanxi Province. In the nineteenth year of the Kangxi Dynasty, a major drought struck the area north of Taiyuan in Shanxi Province and 70 percent of the population began to migrate. In the thirty-fifth year of the Kangxi Dynasty, frosts hit Qingyuan County in Shanxi Province and prices rose, causing people to flee and starve. In the fifty-ninth year of the Kangxi Dynasty, Anze County also suffered a severe disaster and people began to migrate, with people starving to death along the way. Between the twenty-second year of the Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty, there was a major famine in Lingchuan County, Shanxi Province, and the people were fed on tree bark and weeds, with countless people starving to death and in exile. In the spring of the twenty-fourth year of the Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty, a drought occurred in Xiyang County, Shanxi Province. In the spring of the twenty-fifth year of the Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty, there was a major famine in Xiyang County, Shanxi Province, which was compounded by the spread of the plague throughout the region, killing and injuring countless people and sending more than half of them fleeing. In the twenty-fifth year of the Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty, a major plague and famine struck Heshun County in Shanxi Province, with prices rising and more than a thousand people dying.

An overview of the disaster records in the various local chronicles of the Qing Dynasty reveals that severe natural disasters caused massive crop losses and crop failures, rising food prices, and people either starving to death in their hometowns, being displaced, or starving to death in other places, which had a large impact on the demographic changes in the counties of Shanxi, as well as Guxian County, in Linfen.

Although located in the Taiyue Mountains, Guxian in Shanxi Province has a warm temperate monsoon climate, with a dry spring, a hot summer and lots of rain, a cool and wet autumn and a cold and dry winter, with four distinct seasons. The local people live a life of "living off the sky", "if you cultivate a piece of sloping land, you can get a steamed bun", and as long as you work hard to cultivate the land, you can get a harvest. The immigrants were able to make a living by cultivating a large amount of barren land and growing medicinal herbs, so they were not willing to move on. Some immigrants from Henan Province and Hebei Province came in the year of disaster and returned in the year of harvest, while others came in the spring when they planted and returned in the autumn. There is

a local proverb that "people in Henan Province are poor in their legs, and people in Shandong Province are poor in their mouths".^[10] It is for this reason that the number of immigrants from Henan Province and Hebei Province is smaller than that of Shandong Province.

3. Immigration Time and Route Options in Guxian

According to extant documents and historical sources, Guxian in Shanxi Province began to attract immigrants from Shandong Province, Hebei Province and Henan Province to reclaim the land in the early Qing Dynasty. At the end of the Qing Dynasty, Guxian attracted a large number of immigrants from outside the country one after another. According to the *Guxian Zhi*, there were 2,773 people in Guxian in the fifth year of Shunzhi in the Qing Dynasty; there were 4,169 people in Guxian in the eleventh year of Kangxi in the Qing Dynasty; there were 4,154 in the fourth year of Yongzheng in the Qing Dynasty and there were 4,175 in the fifty-fourth year of Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty. At the end of the Qing Dynasty, Guxian was affected by disasters for many years and the population in the area was sparse. In the tenth year of Guangxu in the Qing Dynasty, there were 5,172 households and 35,473 people in Guxian.^[11] Shandong Province, Hebei Province and Henan Province are far from Guxian and separated by the Taihang Mountains. From documentary and historical sources and field research, the migration routes of Shandong Province, Hebei Province and Henan Province basically coincide with ancient post roads. There are two main migration routes for Shandong Province migrants.

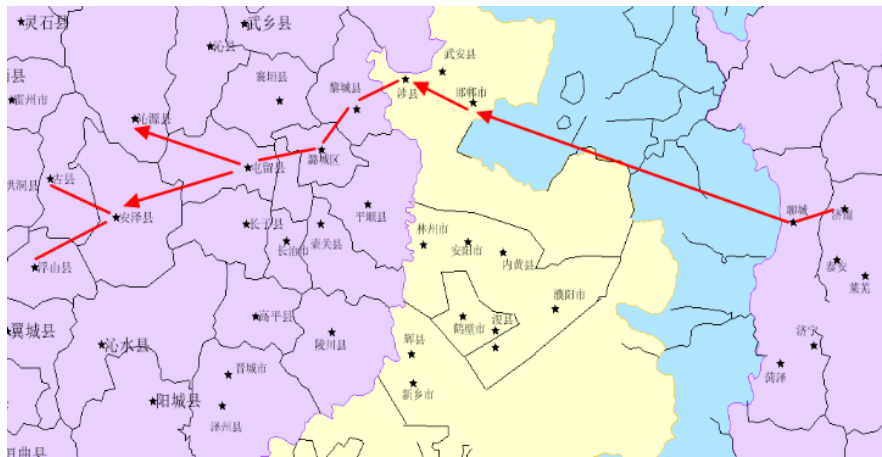


Figure 1: Migrant Migration Routes in Shandong Province (I) (Source of base image: 1911 layer data from the Centre for Historical and Geographical Studies, Fudan University CHGIS)



Figure 2: Migrant Migration Routes in Shandong Province (II) (Source of base image: 1911 layer data from the Centre for Historical and Geographical Studies, Fudan University CHGIS)

The first is to reach the area around Jinzhong City and Changzhi in Shanxi Province via Hebei Province. (Figure 1) From their old homes in Jinan and Qingzhou in Shandong Province, Shandong migrants travelled via the Ming and Qing Dynasty post roads, via Handan and other places in Hebei Province, to reach Zuoquan, Changzhi, Guxian, Anze, Huozhou and Hongdong in Shanxi Province.

The second is to reach the area around southern and southeastern Shanxi Province via Henan

Province. (Figure 2) This route was a common migration route chosen mainly by migrants from the area around southern and southwest Shandong Province, who set out from their home in Shandong Province, crossed the Yellow River and reached places such as Anyang, Puyang and Xinxiang in northern Henan Province, before moving north into Shanxi Province.

4. Conclusions

The strange shortage at the end of the Qing Dynasty led directly to a massive decline in the population of Guxian, but it also provided an opportunity for the subsequent “recruitment of the shortage to attract people”. Migrants from Shandong Province, Hebei Province and Henan Province chose different migration routes to “settle” in Guxian, which became one of the most important places for migrants from Shandong Province, Hebei Province and Henan Province to migrate to. The support of local policies allowed foreign immigrants who were forced to beg for their lives to be helped by the local villagers and escape the suffering of hunger for a while. The simplicity of the people attracted a large number of fleeing victims to settle here, determined not to continue their journey westwards, and to cultivate the barren land and settle in Guxian.

“Cultural identity and identity anxiety are the first cultural dilemma that immigrants will face.”^[12]The languages brought by the immigrants came into contact with the indigenous dialects and constructed a new linguistic culture. From the perspective of historical memory, the choice of route taken by the migrants from Shandong Province played a crucial role in the formation of the dialect island. The psychology of identification with the mother tongue is a bond that sustains family identity and hometown identity, with stability and permanence. It is understood that in everyday life, the Guxian immigrant community uses Mandarin or Guxian Hua externally and insists on using the source dialect internally, which to a certain extent serves as a link to the hometown friendship. In addition, the immigrants then help each other at major folk events such as weddings and funerals, enhancing the cohesion within the immigrants.

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