

# **Bare Branches and Social Stability-A Historical Perspective from China**

Quanbao Jiang

Institute for Population and Development Studies

School of Public Policy and Administration

Xi'an Jiaotong University

Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, 710049, China

Email: recluse\_jqb@126.com

Tel. /Fax: +86-29-8266-8384

**Paper prepared for the 26<sup>th</sup> IUSSP International Population Conference  
Marrakech, Morocco  
27 September to 2 October, 2009**

## **ABSTRACT**

China's bare branches have been a great threat to social stability. Based on historical records and literature, our findings reveal that,

Infanticide of girls, resulting from poverty, son preference, expensive dowry coupled with the practice of taking concubines, had led to that 20 percent of males to remain single.

Under-class bare branches turned to abnormal marriage such as childbride. If no means could be taken, they turned to prostitutes, adultery or even sexual attack.

Humiliated by being bare branches, they drifted away from their hometown, banded together in the form of brotherhood association, secret society, banditry and military groups. These groups posed grave threat on social stability.

In the extreme, they rose up and conquered the government office, confronted government arms, destroyed social infrastructure and system, and even toppled dynastical reign. This kind of extreme violence and disorder annihilated population in thousands or even millions, and hindered social development.

**Keyword:** sex ratio, social stability, marriage, bare branches

## BACKGROUND

Higher than normal sex ratio at birth and excess female child mortality in China has brought about the imbalanced sex ratio of the total population and a large number of missing females, which further prevent millions of males unable to find spouses, even well over the generally acceptable nubile ages. These positively unmarried males are labeled as bare branches in China (Ren, 1999; Hudson and den Boer, 2004). Worldwide, single males commit a great portion of all crimes (Coutwright, 2001). The larger the number of single males, the more violence and antisocial behavior they exhibit (Hartmann, 2006). When single males congregate, organized aggression will surely increase (York, 2007). Bare branches, they don't have the opportunity and tend to be more risky and destructive, which leads to the increase in violence and crimes, and stir wide concern for China's future domestic national stability (Festini and Martino, 2008). Some studies attempt to elucidate the connections between China's bare branches to international stability (Hudson and den Boer, 2004; Poston and Morrison, 2005).

The phenomenon of bare branches has been existent throughout China's history. The deeply rooted patrilineal family systems evoked discrimination against girls and even infanticide in extreme cases, and gave rise to an out of balance sex structure and a shortage of females (Klasen and Wink, 2002), and males outnumbering females (Gao and Li, 1998). Moreover, the accepted monogamous polygamous institution disproportionately distributed females among different social classes, and caused a mass of bare branches (Perry, 1980; Hudson and den Boer, 2004). Historically bare branches existed in different periods and different regions, to a greater or less degree, sometimes with a high proportion, especially among the underclass (Guo, 2000; Wang, 2003).

Historically, the existence of a mass of bare branches often brings about multifaceted consequences. The single status often triggered their variously conscious and unconscious behaviors, including illegal and immoral behaviors, which were

regarded as threats to the morality of marriage and family, and social stability (Sommer, 2000; Courtwright, 2001). Most bare branches are forcibly single; they sought to non-mainstream marriage forms and sexual outlets, and led to the popularity of non mainstream marriage forms and the increase in adultery, prostitution, homosexual and sexual assaults (Guo, 2000; Wang, 2003). These insecure young males-disadvantaged socio-economic status and almost no chances of establishing their own families- tended to collaborate with other bare branches, and enhanced their hierarchical positions through violence and crimes (Hudson and Den Boer, 2004). Bare branches were the primary source and foundation for secret societies, bandit groups and cults, many of which were antisocial. Consequently, bare branches, which principally consisted of these groups, were referred to as one of the main threat to social stability (Tan, 2002; Liu, 2005).

Currently bare branches have aroused wide attention due to their potential threat to social stability (Hudson and den Boer, 2004; Poston, and Morrison, 2005; Jiang and Li, 2009). Nevertheless, little emphasis has been devoted to historical situation. This paper, based on historical archives and literature, focuses on the imbalanced sex structure, bare branches and social stability in China's history. Section 2 describes infanticide, polygamy and bare branches. Section 3 analyses the abnormal marriage form and sexual outlets for bare branches, and Section 5 explores their migration and their formation of brotherhood association and bandit groups. Section 6 depicts how they rebelled and harmed social stability. Section 7 concludes the paper.

## **INFANTICIDE AND POLYGYNY LEADS TO BARE BRANCHES**

### **Infanticide**

All behaviors, conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect, that lead the infants endangered and finally to death, can be labeled as infanticide (Scrimshaw, 1984). Worldwide, both male and female infants are subject to infanticide, but female infants

account for most of infanticide. China's sex selection of children can be tracked back to around 2000 B.C., with female infants mainly being victims (Croll, 1978). Female infanticide prevailed or existed in most parts of ancient China, especially in southern China (Lee, 1981). In the Ming Dynasty, female infanticide was rampant in Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Fujian provinces, and prevalent in Hunan and other provinces (Chang, 2002). In the Qing Dynasty, female infanticide took place in Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Fujian, Guangdong, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, Guangxi, Shanxi and Henan, 12 provinces in total, most seriously in Fujian and Guangxi provinces (Xiao, 2001).

In the Qing Dynasty, female infanticide was so serious that people in all social classes were involved in infanticide (Wang, 2007). General families usually kept the first daughter, and left no chance of living for other birth-order daughters. So few families did not practice infanticide, and some families even killed 4 or 5 infants.

In Peking, thousands of females (mostly females) were disposed like rubbish on the street on a daily basis, were collected by assigned staff and buried outside of the city ((Langer, 1974)). According to County Annals of Xiaogan, in the Reign of Qing Emperor Guangxu, in the Xiaogan County alone, due to the rescue work by a prefecture magistrate surnamed Zhang, over 10 thousand female infants were prevented from being killed (Guo, 2000). In 1843, a missionary detected the serious infanticide in Tongan region in Fujian province. Up to 70 or 80 percent, at least 10 percent of female infants were killed, without being affected by socio-economic situation of families (Lee, 1981). In the late 19th century, a missionary (naturalist) investigated 40 women aged 50 or above. They bore 183 sons and 175 daughters, but 126 sons and only 53 daughters survived to age 10, they killed 78 daughters (Wolf and Huang, 1980). Another survey involved 160 over 50 year old women. They gave birth to 631 sons and 538 daughters, and killed 158 daughters and no son. These 158 daughters accounted for 30 percent of all born. Among the 160 women, only 4 raised more than 3 daughters, one could not remember exactly the number of daughters killed, still one killed 11 daughters. As can be inferred, over 30 percent of all daughters were killed. Since 1774, 1 tenth to 1 fifth of daughters were the victim of infanticide in rural families in northeastern China (Lee and Wang, 1999). Even as

noble as royal members, some female infants were killed. A study of 33,000 imperial members of the Qing dynasty born during 1700 to 1840 indicated the infanticide of 10 percent, and up to 1 fifth among those born in the late 18th century. The mortality rate on the first day after birth for females was 72 per thousand, as ten times high as that for males. The mortality rate in the first month was 160 per thousand for females and 45 per thousand for males (Lee et al., 1994; Lee and Wang, 1999).

Infanticide led to the shortage of females and imbalanced sex structure. As indicated in Table 1, from the Ming Dynasty to the founding of P.R. China, sex ratio fluctuated, but generally exceeded the normal range (Jiang, 1997).

**Table 1 The sex ratio in history**

Year	Sex ratio
1381-1391	113
1749-1845	116-121
Around 1875	118
1909-1928	120-123
1932-1936	112
1946-1947	110
(1953)	(108)

Source: Jiang (1997)

## **Polygyny**

The existence of concubinage can be tracked back to the Zhou Dynasty, or even before, with a history of over 2000 years. In the middle ages, polygynous marriage was legal in China. As a whole, taking concubines is not universal among all classes, and no more than 5 percent of families took concubines in the Ming and Qing dynasty (Yu, 2007). Generally speaking, whether taking concubines and how many concubines to take is closely linked with a man's social status and economic situation. The higher a man's social status, the better a man's economic situation, the more the man took concubines (Guo, 2000). Government officials, local squires, and prestigious families exhibited a high percentage of taking concubines. For instance,

14.28 percent of the eminent Chen clan males in Haining took concubines (Lai, 1989). In the 1930s, 1 third to a half of the wealthy class in Guangzhou took concubines. Polygyny deteriorated the difficulties in finding spouse caused by imbalanced sex structure (Lee and Wang, 1999). Government officials and wealthy people took concubines; while many underclass poor people remained forcibly single (Gao and Li, 1998; Guo, 2000).

## **Bare branches**

Seriously distorted sex structure, caused by vast infanticide, coupled with polygyny, made many males unable to find spouses (Hudson and den Boer, 2004). There are many archives related to the marriage dilemma in infanticide prevalent regions.

In the Qing Dynasty, in Youlong County of Zhejiang province, the population of females was less than one third of that of males; in Guidong county of Hunan province, males outnumbered females by 70 percent; in Guangxin of Jiangxi province, many female infants were killed and males are more than females by 30 to 40 percent; in Wenzhou of Hunan province, the infanticide practice is so serious that 80 percent males could not establish their own families and the fertility declined too; in Yongzhou of Hunan province, poor families did not raise their daughters and poor males could not get married; in Zhuangpu county of Fujian province, bare branches took up 60 to 70 percent; in Guangxin county of Jiangxi province, there was a large number of bare branched aged 30 and above.

In Fujian province, about half of the population in a prefecture region was bare branches during 1649 to 1659. In 1743, around 60 to 70 percent of nubile males were unmarried (T'ien, 1988). In the 1930s, the statistics in Yishu of Fujian province showed an unmarried rate of 36.6 percent for males and 5.2 percent for females (Lin, 2000).

A survey on marital status in 99 villages of 8 districts conducted from 1929 to 1934 indicated that 41.5 percent of males and 28.7 percent of females were single

(Qiao, 1947). In the early 1940s, a survey on marital status carried out by professor Chen Da in 9 counties showed that averagely 19 to 20 percent of males were single and 8 to 9 percent for females (Zhang, 1996). In the Republican Period, a survey implemented by Mo Zhedong exhibited that, in rural Changsha, poor peasants made up 70 percent, moderate peasants 20 percent and rich peasants and landlords 10 percent. Regarding their marital status, rich peasants and landlords were all married, some even took concubines; 10 percent of moderate peasants were single and 30 percent of poor peasants were single, and totally 23 percent of peasants were bare branches, as calculated as follows,  $70\% \times 30\% + 20\% \times 10\% + 10\% \times 0 = 23\%$ .

From the 16th century to the late 19th century, over 20 percent of males were bare branches. The statistics around the year 1800 showed that about 1 fourth of over 30 year old males were single, and 10 to 15 percent of 45 year old males were bare branches (Cao and Chen, 2002).

## **MARRIAGE AND SEX**

Historically, bare branches were forcibly single against their will. Being unable to get married through the dominant marriage form, they turned to other forms, resulting in the appearance and prevalence of abnormal marriages (Guo, 2000; Sommer, 2000; Wang, 2003). Some remained single throughout their life, so they attempted various behaviors, sometimes illegal as adultery, prostitution, homosexual and sexual assault for sexual outlet.

### **Marriage**

Traditionally in China, marriage is the symbol of adulthood. Unmarried males, however old they are, are not regarded as adults and discriminatorily treated (Jiang and Li, 2009). Those forcibly single males, would certainly seek to get married. The poor living conditions and being unable to offer the wedding fees and things alike led to the prevalence of abnormal marriage.

The first is late marriage. Males will spend a longer time to find a spouse due to



the short supply of marriageable females, and imbalanced sex ratio will lengthen the matching process and postpone the marriage (Oppenheimer, 1988). In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a survey in Shanxi province showed that the mean age at first marriage for males is 16, and 26.2 for females, mainly due to the shortage of female supply. Males had to put off their marriage (Qiao, 1947). Many underclass people had to delay their marriage in order to accumulate enough brideprice (Guo, 2000).

The second is child daughter-in-law. Child daughter-in-law was a prevalent marriage form (Guo, 2000). Before 1949, in rural areas in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, around 10 percent of families had married or unmarried child daughter-in-law (Pan, 2002). In 1936, a survey implemented in Wujiang of Jiangsu province showed that 74 women were child daughter-in-law before their marriage of the 439 married women, namely 17 percent. And among unmarried women, 95 were bride daughter-in-law, taking up 33 percent. Locally, on average there was one child daughter-in-law for every 2.7 families.

The third is remarriage by purchase. Among the underclass families, remarriage of females was quite commonplace (Sommer, 2000; Wang, 2003). Remarriage with buying-selling character was prevalent too. One determinant of such practice was the short supply of females due to distorted sex structure, which increased the value in the marriage market and enabled many families benefit from such female remarriage (Hu, 2001, 2003). Due to the existence of a mass of bare branches, it was very easy to find buyers for some widowers who would get remarried and for those wives and daughter-in-laws who would be sold by their husband or parents-in-laws or sometimes by abductors. It was mostly bare branches of the underclass who bought others' wife (Zhuang and Mao, 2003).

The fourth is marriage by kidnapping. Those poverty-stricken people could not afford the marriage expenses, so they took the risk of kidnapping to obtain a wife, sometimes kidnapping widows (Zhuang and Mao, 2003). The practice of kidnapping was attributed to poverty of males and shortage of females (Zhang and Qin, 2005). Families at the bottom of society often kidnapped females for brides by force; sometimes they kidnapped widows (Song, 2003).

The fifth is marriage by exchange. Such marriage practice, as a variant of marriage by purchase, was usually adopted between two or several families, giving up a daughter in exchange for a daughter-in-law. Such a marriage form was prevalent in ancient China, and was mostly adopted by destitute families. For instance, in ancient Chaozhou region, when two impoverished families had bare branches and unmarried daughters, they would reach an agreement on exchange marriage (Chen, 2001).

The sixth is uxori-local marriage. In the patrilineal society, patrilocal marriage dominated and was generally accepted, and uxori-local males were regarded as subordinate and despised. Given the unfavorable social status for uxori-local males, many bare branches in needy families sought actively such marriage forms, resulting in the prevalence of uxori-local marriage at the bottom of the society (Guo, 2000).

The seventh is levirate. Levirate is a primitive marriage institution (Tian, 2005). Originally it had nothing to do with sex ratio. Nevertheless, when many people accepted this form, even at the risk of being executed, this was directly related to out-of-balance sex structure and female shortage (Hou, 2003). For poor underclass males, levirate benefited bare branches and reduced the marriage expense, and still supported the widow and her children, to keep them in the same family (Chen, 2001).

It's very complicated for males to plan their marriage. Due to the long-term shortage of females and the restriction of economic resources applicable to marriage competition, parents had to make a choice of whether to adopt a child daughter-in-law or to find a wife for their son when he fully grew up. Those who did not raise a child daughter-in-law had to take uxori-local marriage or levirate to avoid the high marriage expenses in the regular marriage form. Those unfortunate males either remained single or resorted to above mentioned marriage forms (Lee and Wang, 1999).

## **Sex**

In high sex ration society, prostitute industry prospered and homosexual and polyandrous" marriage increased. Lack of normal marriage life stimulated their adoption of abnormal sex outlet. Adultery, visiting prostitutes even rape cases

involved disproportionately a mass of bare branches.

One way is homosexual. Homosexual among the underclass was indispensable from the large number of bare branches. In the Ming dynasty, in southern Fujian, a mass of underclass bare branches could not enter marriage, and they enjoyed a popular homosexual relation. Such a relation was stable and open, acknowledged by their family and the community. Instead of a dishonor, such a relation could be shown off in public (T'ien, 1988). Homosexual was also prevalent in brotherhood associations and military groups. Guolu, a brotherhood association once active in Sichuan province, consisted mainly of bare branches. These bare branches often formed a god-father and god-son relationship, which was actually a kind of homosexual ties (Chang, 2006).

A second way was prostitution. Visiting a prostitute was a sexual outlet for bare branches with no decently approved ways (Liu, 2005). In the Ming dynasty, in the Luomahu area, a suburb of Tannin, low ranked prostitutes established some wickiups and sold sex inside. Many coolies, including street dealers, wagoners and etc., could not marry and had no enough money for a funhouse, so they visited such the wickiups. In the Qing dynasty, severely distorted sex ratio in Beijing led to a large number of bare branches. They could not relieve their sexual demand and caused a sharp rise in prostitution, directly aiming at the underclass males (Zhang, 1999). In the Republican Period, a vast amount of rural young males swarmed into cities. They could not release their sexual need and called for an increasing demand for sexual deal. In the literature on low rank prostitutes was imbued with disturbing factors such as harassment of social order and transmission of STDs. Low rank prostitutes worked in filthy environment and were considered as potential threat to public health (Hershatter, 1997).

A third way is adultery. The vast existence of bare branches indicated an increasing probability of extramarital sex of married women. Adultery was prevalent among social underclass, especially for single males (Guo, 2003). Without a spouse, they satisfied their sexual need through aberrant behavior and harmed morality and marriage ethics. Adultery was a grave threat to family stability. It ruined marriage and

families, caused conflicts and even homicides. The consequences of adultery were serious and vicious (Wang, 2003).

A fourth way is sexual assault. Males with sexual assault intention were mainly from the bottom of society, and bare branches owned a strong sexually aberrant tendency (Wang, 2003). An analysis on marital status of 28 with clear marital status record among 58 rapists, only 4 were married, and the other 24 were single. As can be inferred, most rapists were single. Taking account of their poverty and profession, they would not get married in the future. Being unmarried is one typical characteristic of rapists in the Qing Dynasty (Sommer, 2000).

Most of female victims of being raped, subjected to both physical and psychological pressure, committed suicide. And rapists were often beaten by relatives of the victim, to death in extreme cases. Anyway, sexual assault was a threat to social order (Wang, 2001).

## **MIGRATION AND CONGREGATION**

Bare branches could not establish their own families. Those impoverished single males, without being concerned with their wealth and families; more readily migrated and sought their fortune far away from their hometown (Zhou and Shao, 1993). Secret societies and brotherhood associations increased at a rapid pace when people were emancipated from families and traveled distantly for employment or security (Billingsley, 1988). Unstable young males, unfavorable social status and impossibility of starting their own family, tended to collaborate with other bare branches for a better socio-economic situation through violence and crimes (Hudson and Den Boer, 2004). Bare branches were a primary source for secret societies, bandit groups and cults. Generally speaking, they embarked on smuggling, gambling, kidnapping, selling opium, running funhouse, trafficking in women and children and forcibly begging, which ruined public benefit and destroyed social order. As the main source for such groups, bare branches were generally regarded as a major threat to social stability (Tan, 2002; Liu, 2005a).

## Migration

According to a statistic of 147941 males in 49 genealogical trees, 18691 emigrated, making up 12.64 percent. Most of those emigrants were destitute peasants, among whom single males took up a great proportion (Guo, 2000; Wang, 2002).

In the Republican Period, a survey on rural migrants in Guangdong, Guangxi and Hebei provinces showed that males took up over 85 percent of all migrants, and over 75 percent were between the age range of 20 to 40 years old (Chen, 1934). A survey of 191 males on characteristics of migrants before 1949 in Shanghai showed that 2 thirds were single males (Lu, 1995). In northeastern China, most migrants were single young men; women just took up a very small proportion (Fan, 2005). During the 7 years from 1921 to 1927, males accounted for at most 94.8 percent and at least 80.1 percent of all migrants annually. Those bare branches were unlikely to find suitable spouse because the majority of them worked as day laborer or were out of employment. Due to their poverty, few women would marry them (Guo, 2000).

Chinese peasants were diligent, honest and tolerate. But once they leave the farm, they would lose such virtues, and believed in a “Chaotic philosophy”, that is, throughout the whole society, there were a warlike tendency and a violence prone tendency (Lv and Wang, 1997).

Many hobos, without the obligation as husband and father and without the supervision of relatives and friends, had no feeling of dishonor. Without a wife and children, they showed completely the bare branch psychology and different ideology and behavior from common peasants. They were abandoned by the mainstream society, led a hard life and sometimes even expelled. They would certainly confront the mainstream society and social order (Wang, 2007).

Hobos were usually bare branches. Bare branches dominated, or at least prevailed in hobo groups (Tan, 2002). As a marginal group isolated from the mainstream society, they generally had no stable jobs and living sources. So they were unstable ingredients, making a living through a decent or indecent way (Mao and Zhao, 2006). Without stable income and employment, hobos were likely to form

criminal organizations (Zhou, 2001). They plundered living resources against morality and rules, by kidnapping, robbing, blackmailing (Chao, 2005). In China's history, peasant rebellion never ceased, this was closely connected with the large number of hobos. Hobos were unstable factors, likely to struck the society into chaos, and turned to a subversive force (Chi, 2001).

## **Congregation**

In China's daily life, family is most important. Such appellations as old brother, uncle, are applied among friends and neighbors. Many individual rely on kinship relations, consciously or unconsciously (Yang, 1965). But in migration, the traditional social bond were weakened or cut off (He, 1988). Migrants became alone individuals, they came to a strange place and had no living means, so they lived in poverty and obtained no help for government and civil society (Wang, 2007). Long-term vagrancy alone made these doleful bare branches in dire need of upbuilding new social network, to satisfy their material and spiritual request (Chao, 2005). Those vagrants, accustomed to enjoy the protection by their clan, needed a pseudo kinship system like secret societies for protection and mutual aid, in order to survive in the living competition (He, 1988). Secret societies united people of the same fate and strengthened their confidence for better survival and development (Wang, 2007). Such substitute groups as secret societies were even more popular than families or communities. They provided not only psychological but also physical security, and served as a consoling replacement for genetic relationship, and offered a robust method of making a living unattainable by other ways (Wang, 1965). Secret societies and bandit groups increased rapidly when people traveled far away from their hometown, in search of employment and security, emancipated from the familial bound (He, 1988; Billingsley, 1988).

Secret societies are secret organizations that took up special religious, social or political activities with secret purpose and ritual, usually they are confronted with governments (Cai, 1987). The formation of secret societies is closely related to

political oppression or subversion (Tiger, 2004). The motive of association of those males without stable employment is to antagonize social order (Cai, 1990). Secret societies in China are a fundamental part of antisocial forces (Chesneaux, 1972). They are inclined to provoke, not submissive to the authority and not reconciled with the government (Tiger, 2004). They are a grave threat to the central government (Hudson and den Boer, 2004).

Bandits go beyond the law system, but they do not go against the social system, they are antisocial violent groups and antagonize the whole society by open killing, raping and etc (Cai, 1993). They consist mainly of single young males (Little, 1989). And most bandits are bare branches (Ownby, 1996, P244; Shan, 2006). Having not a wife drove many of them to bandits, and being a bandit is the pursuit of many unemployed single young males (Perry, 1980, 127). The motivation of many young males' joining in the bandits is to find a wife, that is why many groups lured young males by promising them to select female captives as a routine way.

What's more, sometimes young males not only establish their masculine self-esteem by obtaining a wife, but also strengthen the pride by taking concubines (Wu, 1933). The bandit life is strong opposed the normal life. In the late Qing dynasty, bandit events in northern Jiangsu province are replete in newspapers and government reports (Perry, 1980, 62). Few towns and villages were exempt from bandit disturbance (Zhang, 1927). In 1930, the number of bandits came up to 20 million (Chi and Zhu, 2004).

Besides bandits, there were still soldier bandits. In ancient China, soldiers were almost of the social status of bandits (Xiong, 1998). In the capital, soldiers were labeled as "red old", referring to bare branches without families and employment (Wang, 2007). In the reign of Beiyang warlord, joining the army is the most admirable profession for those aggressive males. Many took the bandit group as a stepping stone, because many bandits group could convert into armies, and then be promoted to official positions. For those destitute guys who even could not pay the brideprice, this is the shortcut to make their mark (Lv and Wang, 1997). Unable to making living by

farming, many males joined the army, in order to be fed (Smedley, Agnes, 1956,) . They were underpaid, but they enjoyed other privileges (such as free meals, plundering, raping females, smuggling opium).

Vagrants tried to avoid collision with local clans when they were living as individuals, but went against the surrounding once they were organized (Peng and Shu, 2003). Bare branches, migrated due to social and economic dilemma, degenerated into vagrants and formed secret societies, bandits groups and soldier-bandit groups. Anyway, they are parasitic and destructive to the society (Chi, 2001).

## **REBELLION**

Bare branches are unstable factors to the society and exert significant effect on collective conflicts. Most members of predatory and protective activities are bandits, they make up of smuggling organizations, secret societies, bandit groups, crop-watching groups, and militia. Secret societies and many other groups are closely related to political oppression and subversive activities, serve as agents in social revolution (Chesneaux, 1972; Ownby, 1996, Pvii; Tiger, 2004, P136).

Tiandihui is one of the most important secret societies in China's history. It developed rapidly in the subsequent over 100 years since its foundation. The extension to different regions is attributed to the mass of vagrants in late Qing Dynasty(Murray, 1993). Many males, born in the high fertility, could not be fully employed in the family, clan and communities, so they are marginalized (Tong, 1991). Since the early Qing dynasty, secret societies and brotherhood associations, as informal organizations, had been quite popular among those marginalized young males in south eastern coastal regions (Ownby, 1996). Among the active and influential societies and associations, Tiandihui is the most influential one. Originally it was a self-defensive secret society making up of coolies in the coastal region of Fujian, Guangdong and Guangxi provinces. Those day laborers, along the waterway and landway, were confronted with the unstable employment and severe oppression of



local malfeasants, so they organized themselves to defend themselves. Tiandihui in itself is an association of underclass people, act as dissidents against the mainstream societies. Once it fully develops, it would revolt, under the pretext of social conflicts (Qin, 2005). In the southeastern coastal provinces, Tiandihui is the symbol of revolting against the government (Ownby, 1996).

Secret societies made up of such groups as is called floating population currently in China. Due to demographic or social transformation, this population were forced to leave their hometown and migrated to seek their fortune, in the way usually regarded as illegal by the authority (Ownby, 1996). Without a stable income and employment, those vagrants were likely to join the criminal organizations. Organizers and top leaders were mainly knight-errants, swordsmen, vagrant monks and Taoists, barnstormers and warlocks. Participants were primarily vagrants, including bankrupt peasants, craftsmen, street dealers, boat trackers, salt smugglers and so on (Shao, 1961; Wan, 2007). In the third year of the reign of Jiaqing Emperor, the Xiaodaohui (small sword society, a branch of Tiandihui) uprising in Danshui, Taiwan, 12 were arrested. These arrestees were among 21 to 48 years old, all having no wife, children and family (Zhou and Shao, 1993). Still in Taiwan, according to the testament of the captives in the Lin Shuangwen uprising, unmarried people took up the prepondence of the participants in the pursuing (Jiang and Li, 2009).

In Taiwan, Luohanjiao referred to those males with no land, no property and no wife and children. They were bare branches, wandering and congregating. In large cities and villages, they could gather in hundreds, and in small cities and villages, they gathered in dozens. Their existence accounted for why Taiwan was difficult to govern (Chen, 1827). Single migrant males from southern Fujian often formed associations and fought armed, they ruined social order and posed a grave threat to social stability. The Tiandihui after the 53rd year of the Qianlong reign, constituted mainly Luohanjiao who illegally immigrated to Taiwan. They usually stole, plundered in crowd, antagonized policemen, gambled, armed fought, and revolted, posed a major threat to social stability (Liu, 2001).

## CONCLUSION

For rural families, it seemed like a rational choice to foster sons at the sacrifice of daughters, but it brought about a serious surplus of males (Perry, 1980; Hudson and den Boer, 2004, P209; Daniel Little, 1989) . Infanticide, coupled with polygyny, hindered many males from getting married. These unmarried males are labeled as bare branches and existed, to a greater or less degree, throughout China's history (Perry, 1980; Hudson and den Boer, 2004; Guo, 2000; Wang, 2003).

Bare branches sought actively marriage, by abnormal marriage forms, and therefore led to tragedies (Guo, 2000; Sommer, 2000; Wang, 2003). Many criminal cases arose from unharmonious relationship between child daughter-in-law marriages. Those who could not get married anyway, visited prostitutes, took up adultery or attacked sexually, and caused vicious consequences (Wang, 2003).

Historically, bare branches caused by high sex ratio are attributed to violence(Ownby,1996; Watson,1989) . Those destitute proletariats were least stable and inclined to commit crimes and destroyed social order (Yang, 2003). They exerted significant influence on collective conflicts and were the main source for secret societies, brotherhood associations, bandit groups, and other organizations alike (Little, 1989; Perry, 1980). They took various activities, and in the extreme revolted.

Under the signboard of enforcing justice on behalf of Heaven, many revolters set attack on imperial authority, and tramped down all written or oral social norms and laws (Wang, 2007). Some branches of Tiandihui, revolted under the flag of 'plundering the rich and helping the poor', some were completely robbers, and still some formed a group, ready for being taken over by the government so as to be promoted to officials. Their splendid slogan, "Overthrow the Qing dynasty and restore the Ming dynasty', was just a signboard appealing to the prospective participants (Qin, 2005). In the eyes of Luxun, peasant uprising and revolt was "freebooting destruction, leaving only rubbles and having nothing to do with construction". Peasant revolts could not push China's development (Qin, 1995).

## REFERENCES

### English

- Billingsley, Phil, 1988, *Bandits in Republican China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Chesneaux, J., 1972, *Popular Movement and Secret Societies in China, 1840-1950*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Courtwright, D. T., 2001/1996, *Violent Land, Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Croll, E., 1981, *The Politics of Marriage in Contemporary China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Festini, F. and M de Martino, 2008, Twenty five years of the one child family policy in China, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*: 358-360.
- Hartmann, Betsy, 2006, The testosterone threat: sociobiology, national security and population control. [http://popdev.hampshire.edu/projects/dt/pdfs/DifferenTakes\\_41.pdf](http://popdev.hampshire.edu/projects/dt/pdfs/DifferenTakes_41.pdf).
- Hsiao Kung-ch'uan, 1967, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Centuries*, Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Hudson, V. and A.M. den Boer, 2004a, *Bare Branches: The security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- Klasen, S. and C. Wink, 2002, A turning point in gender bias in mortality? An update on the number of missing women, *Population and Development Review* 28(2): 285-312.
- Langer, W.L., 1974, Infanticide: A historical survey, *History of Childhood Quarterly: The Journal of Psychohistory* 1(3): 353-365.
- Lee, B. J., 1981, Female infanticide in China, in Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen(eds.), *Women in China: Current Directions and Historical Scholarship*, Youngstown, N.Y.: Philo.
- Lee, J., Cameron Campbell and Guofu Tan, 1992, Infanticide and family planning in late imperial China: The price and population history of rural Liaoning, 1774-1873, In Thomas G. Rawski and Lillian M. Li(eds.), *Chinese History in Economic Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lee, J. and F. Wang, 1999, *Malthusian model and Chinese realities: The Chinese demographic system 1700-2000*, *Population and Development Review* 25(1): 33-65.
- Little, D., 1989, *Understanding Peasant China: Case Studies in the Philosophy of Social Science*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 172.
- Oppenheimer, V. K., 1988, A theory of marriage timing, *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 563-591.
- Ownby, D., 1996, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China: The Formation of a Tradition*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Perry, J. E., 1980, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China: 1845-1945*, Stanford: Calif.: Stanford University Press.

- Poston, D. L. and P. A. Morrison, 2005, China: Bachelor bomb, *International Herald Tribune*, SEPTEMBER 14, 2005
- Ren, Feng, 1999, Bare branches among rural migrant labors in China: Causes, Social implications, and policy proposal. Foreign Affairs College, Beijing, March, 1999.
- Scrimshaw, S., 1984, Infanticide in human populations: Societal and individual concerns, in Glenn Hausfater and Sarah Blaffer Hrdy (eds.), *Infanticide: Comparative and Evolutionary Perspectives*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Shan, P. F., 2006, Insecurity, outlawry and social order: Banditry in China's Heilongjiang frontier region, 1900-1931, *Journal of Social History* (3):25-54.
- Smedley, Agnes, 1956, *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh*, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Sommer, M. H., 2000, *Sex, Law and Society in Late Imperial China*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- T'ien, Ju-k'ang, 1988, *Male Anxiety and Female Chastity: A Comparative Study of Chinese Ethical Values in Ming-Ch'ing Times*, New York: E.J. Brill.
- Tiger, L., 2004/1984, *Men in Groups*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick (U.S.A) and London (U.K.).
- Tong, J. W., 1991, *Disorder Under Heaven: Collective Violence in the Ming Dynasty*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Watson, James L., 1989, Self-defense corps, violence, and the bachelor's subculture in south China: Two case studies. In *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Sinology*, Academia Sinica, Taiwan (Republic of China), June 1989, p.216.
- Wolf, A. P. and C. Huang, 1980, *Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Yang, C.K., 1965, *Chinese communist society: The family and the village*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press.
- York, Geoffrey, 2007, *Beijing's bachelor bulge: the unprecedented surplus of boys*, *Globe and Mail*, April 28, 2007.

## Chinese

- Cai, Shaoqing. 1993. *Bandits in the Republican Period*. Renmin University of China press.
- Cai, Shaoqing. 1987. *Study on the History of Secret Societies in Modern China*. Zhonghua Book Company.
- Cao, Shuji and Yixin Chen. 2002. Malthusian theory and China's population since the Qing dynasty—Comments on the recent study by American scholars. *History Study* (1): 41-54.
- Chang, Jianhua. 2002. Study on the infanticide in the Ming dynasty. In *Review of China's Social History*. The Commercial Press.
- Chao, Longqi. 2005. On the relationship between vagrants and secret societies. *Guizhou Social Sciences* (2): 139-143.
- Chen, Hanchu. 2001. Old customs in marriage in Chaoxian. *Guangdong History* (4): 42-48.

- Chen, Hansheng. 1934. *Relations of Production and Productivity*. Shanghai Zhongshan Cultural and Educational Center.
- Chen, Shengyun. 1827/1983. *On Customs*. Bibliography and Document Publishing House.
- Chi, Zihua. 2001a. *Vagrants and Social Control*. Guangxi People's Publishing House.
- Deng, Weizhi and Rong Xu. 2001. *Family Sociology*. China Social Sciences Press.
- Fan, Lijun. 2005. *Modern Northeastern Migrants and Social Transformation (1860-1931)*. Doctoral Dissertation in Zhejiang University.
- Gao, Kai and Pingfang L. 1998. Study of the sex ratio in ancient China. *History Monthly* (3): 105-11.
- Guo, Songyi. 2000. *Ethnics and Life-Marriage Relationship in the Qing Dynasty*. The Commercial Press.
- Guo, Songyi. 2003. Investigation into adultery from 403 criminal cases in Qing dynasty. *History Study* (3): 51-67.
- He, Xiya. 1925. *On China's Bandits*. Taidong Library.
- Hershatter, Gail. 1997. *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. University of California Press.
- Hou, Chunyan. 2003. Socio-cultural background of wealth-oriented marriage in modern Shanxi province. *Jinyang Study* (4): 78-81.
- Hu, Zhongsheng. 2001. Abnormal marriage in the underclass in Huizhou in the Ming and Qing dynasty. *Anhui History Study* (1): 5-12.
- Jiang, Quanbao and Shuzhuo Li. 2009. *Female Deficit and Social Stability*. Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Jiang, Tao. 1997. Sex and age structure of ancient population. *Modern History Study* (6): 1-22.
- Lai, Huimin. 1989. The demographic study of Zha and Chen clans in the Ming and Qing dynasty. *Mainland Journal* (3).
- Lin, Yaohua. 2000. *Study of clans in Yixu*. Sanlian book store.
- Liu, Ping. 2000b. *New explanation of Lin Shuangwen uprising*. Qing Dynasty History Study (2): 92-99.
- Liu, Ping. 2000a. On the relationship between Tiandihui and Lin Shuangwen uprising. *Nanjing University Journal* (4): 61-70.
- Liu, Xinhui. 2001. Countermeasures by the imperial authority after the Lin Shuangwen uprising in the Qing dynasty. *Journal of Postgraduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences* (5): 66-75.
- Liu, Zhongyi. Old single males and rural stability-One prediction of social implications of increasing sex ratio at birth. *Juvenile Delinquency Study* (5): 17-22.
- Lu, Hanlong. 1995. Characteristics of migrants before 1949 in Shanghai. *Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Research Quarterly* (1): 135-143.
- Lu, Yong. 2003. Secret societies and social transformation in modern times. *Yunnan Social Science* (4): 83-87.
- Lv, Junwei and Yaosheng Wang. 1997. Bandits in Shandong in Beiyang warlord period. *Journal of Yantai University* (3): 88-93.

- Mao, Wenjun and Ke Zhao. 2006. The scientific judgement of vagrants by Mao Zedong. *Research of Mao Zedong Thoughts* (6): 51-53.
- Pan, Yunkang. 2002. *Family Sociology*. China Auditing Publishing House.
- Peng, Xianguo and Yehe Shu. 2003. The origin of Tiandihui in Hunan province. *Journal of Xiangtan University* (3): 78-81.
- Qiao, Qiming. 1947a. *Social Economics in Rural China*. The Commercial Publishing Company.
- Qin, Baoqi. 1995. Secret societies and the fate of the peasant class in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. *The Qing Dynasty History Studies* (1): 80-91.
- Qin, Baoqi. 2005. *China's Underground Societies*. China Academy Publishing House.
- Shao, Xunzheng. 1961. Secret societies, religion and peasant wars. *Journal of Beijing University* (3): 1-7.
- Tan, Ping. 2002. Imbalanced sex ratio and social stability. *Journal of Chengdu University* (3): 24-29.
- Tian, Wangjie. 2005. Levirate in ancient China. *Journal of the Second Northwestern Ethnic Groups College* (1): 70-73.
- Wang, Yifu. 2007. Infanticide and child daughter-in-law in Fujian province in Qing dynasty. *Southeastern Scholarship* (2): 137-144.
- Wang, Fenling. 2001. *China's Marriage History*. Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- Wang, Junji. 1995. *Lu Xun, Guo Moruo and Traditional Culture*. Baihua Literature and Art Publishing House.
- Wang, Xuetai. 2007. *Vagrant Culture and Chinese Society*. Tongxin Publishing House.
- Wang, Yuesheng. 2003. *Marriage Conflicts in the Middle Qing Dynasty*. Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Wang, Yuesheng. 2002b. Population migration in the middle and late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In *History of Marriage and Family in Ming and Qing Dynasty*. Tianjin People's Publishing House.
- Wu, Zhongdao. 1933. Review of bandit activities in war zone of northern China. *New China*. November 25, 1933.
- Xiao, Qian. 2001. Infanticide and prohibition in Jiangxi province in Qing Dynasty. *Historical Review* (1): 63-68.
- Xiong, Zhiyong. 1998. *From Marginalized to Central-Soldier Groups in Social Transformation in the Late Qing Dynasty*. Tianjin People's Publishing House.
- Yang, Jianli. 2003. Infanticide in modern northern China. *Journal of Beijing Science and Technology University* (4): 79-81.
- Yu, Xinzong. 2007. *China's Family History* (The 4<sup>th</sup> volume: Ming and Qing dynasty). Guangdong People's Publishing House.
- Zhang, Baiqing. 1999. Prostitution in China's early urbanization. *History Monthly* (1): 99-103.
- Zhang, Jiehou. 1927. Living situations in northern Jiangsu province. *Oriental Journal* (16): 73-74.
- Zhang, Minjie. 2004. *Marriage and Family in Ancient China*. Zhejiang People's Publishing House.

Zhang, Qingwu. 1996. *Study of Population Statistics in China's History* (the Republican Period). In Zihui Yang (eds.). *Study of Population Statistics in China's History*. China Reformation Publishing House.

Zhang, Yan and Liping Mao. 2003. *Perspectives on Socioeconomics of Chinese Families in the Middle 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Renmin University of China Press.

Zhou, Yumin and Yong Shao. 1993. *History of Chinese Gangs*. Shanghai People's Publishing House.