



Research on the Anti-Poverty Strategy of the Southern Song Government and Its Contemporary Value

SUN Jing^{[a],*}; WANG Ziyi^[a]; ZHOU Bingxin^[b]

^[a] School of Liberal Arts, University of Jinan, Jinan, China.

^[b] School of Literature, College of Foreign Languages, Shihezi University, Shihezi, China.

*Corresponding author.

Supported by the General Project of Shandong Province Humanities and Social Sciences Program of the Ministry of Education, 2017, "Research on Poverty and Anti-Poverty in the Southern Song Dynasty" (ID: J17RB065).

Received 20 June 2023; accepted 16 August 2023

Published online 26 September 2023

Abstract

In the Song Dynasty, significant changes occurred in Chinese traditional society: monetary economy thrived and commoner culture was very popular. However, there were also social problems such as the widening wealth gap and the increase in poverty behind economic prosperity. The Southern Song Dynasty was established after Jianyan Nandu. Under the confrontation with the minority regime in the north, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty adopted a series of anti-poverty measures and encouraged the people to carry out anti-poverty activities to deal with corresponding social problems, so as to consolidate their political stability. Because the anti-poverty measures system of the Southern Song government is relatively complete and the system is relatively strict, it is still of great significance to today's society. This article tries to explore the anti-poverty measures of the Southern Song government and tries to reveal its contemporary value.

Key words: The Southern Song dynasty; Anti-poverty; Contemporary value

Sun, J., Wang, Z. Y., & Zhou, B. X. (2023). Research on the Anti-Poverty Strategy of the Southern Song Government and Its Contemporary Value. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 19(3), 39-43. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/13179>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13179>

1. OVERVIEW OF ANTI-POVERTY MEASURES OF THE SOUTHERN SONG GOVERNMENT

The war in the Central Plains of the Song Dynasty was still frequent and the climate was abnormal. Therefore, a large number of northern people moved to the south. Although the area controlled by the government of the Southern Song Dynasty remained relatively stable, there are still serious social problems of the increasing population density, the huge social and economic damage caused by frequent floods and droughts, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. In addition, the Southern Song government's concept of governing the country and the prosperity of Confucianism made the Southern Song government pay relative attention to the relief of the poor. Its anti-poverty measures can be divided into poverty alleviation measures directly carried out by the government and non-governmental anti-poverty activities encouraged by the government. These anti-poverty measures can also be classified according to the groups affected, such as relief for the famine-stricken poor, relief for the socially poor and special social groups.

1.1 Anti-poverty measures directly carried out by the government

1.1.1 Anti-poverty measures for the poor caused by the disaster supported by the government of the Southern Song Dynasty

In the Song Dynasty, disasters and famines occurred frequently, and floods, droughts and fires caused a large number of poor people in the areas controlled by the Southern Song Dynasty. In the early parts of the Southern Song Dynasty alone, there were 45 floods, 24 droughts and 43 fires. (Li, 2011, p.91) In order to cope with the poverty caused by the famine, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty formulated anti-poverty strategies

from the aspects of prevention, emergency response, and post-disaster resettlement and relief.

To deal with the famine, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty continued the various warehouse species established in the Northern Song Dynasty, which can be divided into two types: national warehouse species and local warehouse species. The former is directly subordinate to the central government, Ever-Normal Granary, Charity Granary, etc. are the representatives; the latter is managed by local financing and its administrative relations are also under local jurisdiction, Community Granary is the representative. Most of these warehouses were created in the early Northern Song Dynasty but the establishment of Community Granary can even be traced back to the Sui Dynasty. After entering the Southern Song Dynasty, the rescue function of the original warehousing system was reduced, and some new local warehouses appeared, such as Yongli Granary, Zhendai Granary and so on.

When the famine came, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty took corresponding emergency measures. In terms of institutional setup, the permanent institutions responsible for disaster relief are transport commission, judicial commission and ever-normal granary commission, and the temporary institutions are military commissioner and investigation commissioner. When these institutions exercise the power of relief, they also need local officials to cooperate with them. When the famine breaks out, the victims narrated the disaster, the officials checked and copied the disaster documents, after that, the specific disaster relief work officially began. The relief measures of the Southern Song government are divided into two categories, one is purely official-led administrative measures, and the other is market-led measures. Among the administrative measures, measures such as Zhenji, Zhentiao, Zhendai and porridge-giving provide materials to the victims in a paid or freeway, so that people who become poor caused by the disaster can maintain their lives; Measures such as relying on the cabinet and reducing the taxes have reduced the economic pressure on the victims, which is an indirect relief method. In addition, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty has also adopted supporting measures such as a wide ban on arrest, in order to provide a relatively relaxed policy environment for the disaster victims to resume social production. In addition to policy measures, the Southern Song government also formulated economic market measures. Most of these measures were firstly invented by the Song Dynasty and became more and more important over time. In the "Relief Thought of Famine" written by Dong Wei in the Southern Song Dynasty, market-oriented measures such as price suppression and Jin e-di are mentioned many times. In other words, these emergency measures of the Southern Song government have curbed poverty caused by disasters to a certain extent.

After the famine, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty will also carry out social recovery work. Such as tax reduction, borrowing for cattle and grain, etc. In addition, the resettlement of refugees is also an important part of the anti-poverty measures of the Southern Song government. Large-scale refugees have seriously affected the social stability of the areas controlled by the Southern Song Dynasty. In this regard, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty has formulated a series of measures to resettle the refugees. For example, local resettlement, repatriation of deported people, etc., act flexibly according to the situation, so that the refugees can resume social production as soon as possible to the greatest extent.

1.1.2 Anti-poverty measures of the Southern Song government to help poor people

During the Southern Song Dynasty, with the development of society and economy, many problems also occurred, such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the increase of poor groups. In order to help the poor, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty set up permanent institutions, such as the Hospice Institute and the Public Charity Institute. Professor Zhang Wen of Southwest University pointed out: "From a functional point of view, these institutions can be divided into four categories, one is a comprehensive institution for the adoption of the poor and the sick, the second is the institution for the adoption of the poor, the third is the institution for the treatment of poor patients, and the fourth is the funeral aid for the poor." (Zhang, 2001, p.161) In addition to the relatively systematic permanent institutions, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty also introduced supporting measures to help poor people overcome difficulties in life. For example, medical relief. During the epidemic, the Southern Song government continued the tradition of the Northern Song Dynasty, sending more medical officers and medical students for treatment. When the poor people are unable to buy drugs to treat diseases on weekdays, the government-sponsored pharmacies and other institutions will help the poor mainly in two ways: free treatment and affordable drugs. For example, when the poor people have no money to keep warm in winter or they are unable to buy food in spring, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty often takes seasonal relief measures, such as giving paper clothes to resist the cold, selling charcoal at a reduced price, lending people food, etc.

All above summarizes the anti-poverty strategy to help the generally poor people of the government of the Southern Song Dynasty. In addition to social reasons, due to their own factors such as gender and age, women, the elderly and young children who belong to socially vulnerable groups have a weak ability to cope with poverty. The Southern Song Government also provided assistance to these socially vulnerable groups, including

Elderly Care, Salesian, And Female Household. In the event of a famine, the general principle of relief begins with the elderly and young children, while in normal times, the responsibility of the elderly is mostly borne by the permanent institutions that mentioned above. In the Southern Song Dynasty, there were also specialized elderly care institutions such as charity ward for the aged people. When there are more than 80-year-olds in family, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty will give certain preferential treatment. In the Southern Song Dynasty, Ningzong even issued an edict to give the centenarian an official position, showing the court's attitude of giving preferential treatment to the elderly. As to children, because the phenomenon of infanticide caused by poverty in the Southern Song Dynasty was particularly serious, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty supported relevant groups such as pregnant women and young children from the aspects of prevention and post-post remediation. In addition to traditional measures such as child care delivery, compared with the Northern Song Dynasty, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty introduced a policy of exemption from taxes and miscellaneous corvee services for pregnant women, so that pregnant women can be taken care of by their husband, relieving the pressure on their family. As to abandoned children and orphans, the government of the Southern Song Dynasty established special Salesian institutions, such as the Baby Bureau and the Ciyou Bureau. Besides, there are some auxiliary relief measures, which are private charitable measures encouraged by the government.

The so-called care for women actually refers to the care and relief for widows. (p.221) When there is no man in the family, widows are often disadvantaged in traditional society and easy to fall into poverty. To solve this problem, the government of the Northern Song Dynasty adopted the law of exempting women from service and exempting adult male tax. This policy was basically continued in the Southern Song Dynasty. Due to the small number of populations, single female households often had to undergo labor serve, but their number was limited.

1.1.3 Anti-poverty measures to support special social groups of Southern Song government

The so-called special social groups, that is, groups with special identities or unique status in society. In the Song Dynasty, these mainly include officials and scholars, royal families, returnees to the Song Dynasty and ethnic minorities. For various reasons, these special social groups are also facing the problem of poverty. The causes of poverty of these groups and the support measures of the Southern Song government are roughly as follows:

First, officials and scholars, especially the poor eunuchs and the poor scholars. Although the Song Dynasty ruled the country through culture and treated

officials with great favor, the number of officials living in poverty was not small because the number of officials is very large and they need to bear economic burdens such as helping their family and relocation expenses. The reason for the emergence of the poor is the high cost of studying and taking exams. In order to implement the Song Dynasty's strategy of governing the country through culture and alleviate the poverty of officials, the Southern Song government adopted measures such as providing compensation to the deceased and funding the travel expenses for officials to attend and return home, in order to minimize the additional burden on officials; For impoverished scholars, the Southern Song government restored Taixue and established academies in local areas to support scholars. Counties in various regions also made efforts to increase their academic fields to subsidize tuition fees; Local officials and scholars have also established institutions such as Gongshizhuang to subsidize the travel expenses of scholars who travel to distant places to take exams.

Secondly, the royal family. Although the Song Dynasty favored the royal family, some royal families with distant blood ties also faced poverty due to the significant increase in the number of royal families. After Jianyan Nandu, the number of royal families firstly decreased rapidly because of war and then increased rapidly. At this time, the royal family had the characteristics of being numerous and widely distributed. The Southern Song court adopted a strategy of providing economic preferential treatment and political control, and followed the management methods of the Northern Song Dynasty when granting generous and preferential treatment to the royal family, achieving control over the royal family and maintaining political stability.

Thirdly, those who returned to the Song Dynasty and ethnic minorities. During the Song Dynasty, there were constantly various people who belonged to the Song Dynasty, and these people were called Gui Song people. After the construction of the Yunnan Ferry, a large number of people from the Central Plains migrated south. The assistance provided by the Southern Song government to these returning Song people was roughly equivalent to its general anti-poverty strategies, such as resettlement and exemption. For ethnic minorities, the assistance provided by the Southern Song government to ethnic minorities has shown a shift from symbolic significance to practical significance. However, compared to Han society, the implementation of anti-poverty measures by the Southern Song government in ethnic minority areas is not ideal. On the one hand, this was due to the inability of the Southern Song government to deeply control the lower levels of ethnic minority areas, and on the other hand, it was also due to the relatively low economic level in ethnic minority areas.

1.2 Non-governmental anti-poverty activities encouraged by the Southern Song government

Compared with the power of the government, the power of anti-poverty activities among the people in the Southern Song Dynasty was relatively small, and the organizational form was relatively loose. These activities are mostly advocated by scholars and squires. To a certain extent, they are semi-official and generally used as supplementary measures for official anti-poverty measures.

1.2.1 Anti-poverty activities by the people during the Southern Song Dynasty to assist poverty-stricken populations caused by disasters

In addition to various warehouse types established by the Southern Song government, folk also established warehouse types to prepare for famine. Among them, the most famous was the community granary established during Zhu Xi's reign in Chong'an County, Fujian Province, which was later promoted under the name of the court and widely distributed. These social warehouses not only provide relief and loans during disasters, but also have functions such as caring for children or treating illnesses.

When the famine came, people mainly used Zhentiao and porridge-giving to relieve poverty. The former belongs to Zhenji with charge, while the latter belongs to Zhenji without charge, which to some extent alleviates the plight of the impoverished population caused by disasters. In addition, there are also ways for people to relieve poverty through Zhendai, which is mostly carried out by social warehouses. However, civil relief generally does not involve the resettlement of disaster victims.

1.2.2 Anti-poverty activities of folk assistance to the impoverished population in the Southern Song Dynasty

Due to Confucian beliefs and family relationships, some economically powerful local gentry often presided over poverty alleviation activities. The basic forms of folk poverty alleviation activities include providing food and clothing, as well as giving away land and money. In addition to these direct gift measures, there were also means such as reducing the loans and reducing the taxes among the people of the Southern Song Dynasty as an expansion form of poverty alleviation activities. In the Southern Song Dynasty, some charitable organizations were established to provide medical services to the impoverished population, such as the Raising Economics Institute established in the ninth year of the Chunxi reign (1182), which was of a large scale. Overall, there are relatively few charitable organizations providing medical assistance services, so private treatment by private individuals has become an organic supplement to medical assistance for the impoverished population because people in Song Dynasty attach great importance to marriage and funerals. In addition, marriage and funerals have become a huge economic burden for the impoverished population.

And precisely because of the concept of valuing marriage and funerals, there is also widespread assistance for the marriage and funerals of poor people. From historical records, there are many cases of supporting the marriage of daughters, while supporting funerals mainly focuses on the three most expensive items: mortuary, coffin, and cemetery.

For socially disadvantaged groups, there were also charitable activities among the people of the Southern Song Dynasty, such as supporting the elderly and adopting orphans. The Southern Song government also formulated some regulations to encourage adoption activities. For women, compared to the government's focus on providing relief to female households, folk charity activities in the Southern Song Dynasty increased their care for maidservants who committed themselves to poverty. Some scholars would redeem maidservants and let them marry others.

In addition, there were also many activities among the people in the Southern Song Dynasty to support public welfares, such as building bridges and roads, constructing water conservancy projects, and opening private schools, which to some extent promoted social and economic development and reduced social poverty levels.

2. CURRENT VALUE

China's battle against poverty has won a decisive victory in 2020, but under the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, the global economy continues to be sluggish, and China also has to face challenges under the new economic normal. Therefore, it is still of great practical significance to explore measures to reduce poverty. Reducing the anti-poverty measures of the Southern Song government and exploring the non-governmental anti-poverty strategies encouraged by the Southern Song government are not only an investigation of historical problems, but also a reference for solving practical problems.

In addition, in terms of poverty alleviation, the Southern Song government not only paid attention to temporary relief, but also focus on systematic support. Although the anti-poverty measures of the Southern Song government have traditional agricultural social characteristics, its anti-poverty ideas can still be used as a reference at present. When formulating anti-poverty strategies, we should make a comprehensive investigation and build a comprehensive policy system. It is necessary not only to relieve people's needs, but also to enhance the self-development ability of the poor, rather than returning to poverty again after getting rid of poverty.

3. CONCLUSION

Anti-poverty measures in the Southern Song Dynasty were divided into two types: government-led and government-

encouraging civilian implementation. The restoration of the anti-poverty measures of the Southern Song government not only helps us deepen our understanding of the anti-poverty strategies of the Song Dynasty, but also helps us to write the history of ancient Chinese charity. Furthermore, it also helps us absorb its anti-poverty ideas and deal with realistic problems better.

REFERENCES

- Li, N. (2011). *Study on the Famine and Disaster Relief Measures in Liangzhe Area in the early Southern Song Dynasty*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai.
- Zhang, W. (2001). *Research on Social Relief in Song Dynasty*. Chongqing: Xinan Normal University Press.
- Zhang, W. (2005). *Research on Folk Charity Activities in Song Dynasty*. Chongqing: Xinan Normal University Press.
- Zhang, W. (2012). Research on the thought of rural social security in the Song Dynasty-Centered on ' Books on Famine Relief for Better Well Being of The People '. *Journal of Soochow University Philosophy & Social Science Edition*, (04).
- Zhao, H. X. (2008). The Song Dynasty Government 's Social Assistance to the Poverty Population. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Agricultural University (Social Science Edition)*. (02).