

Famine & Infanticide in China

George Ernest Morrison, an Australian doctor in China, from his book on travel in China, 1902 CE

The selling of its female children into slavery is the chief sorrow of this famine-stricken district. During last year it is estimated, or rather, it is stated by the Chinese, that no less than three thousand children from this neighborhood, chiefly female children and a few boys, were sold to dealers and carried like poultry in baskets to the capital. At ordinary times the price for girls is one tael (three shillings) for every year of their age, thus a girl of five costs fifteen shillings, of ten, thirty shillings, but in time of famine children, to speak brutally, become a drug in the market. Female children were now offering at from three shillings and fourpence to six shillings each. You could buy as many as you cared to, you might even obtain them for nothing if you would enter into an agreement with the father, which he had no means of enforcing, to take care of his child, and clothe and feed her, and rear her kindly. Starving mothers would come to the mission beseeching the foreign teachers to take their babies and save them from the fate that was otherwise inevitable. Girls are bought in Chaotong up to the age of twenty, and there is always a ready market for those above the age of puberty; prices then vary according to the measure of the girl's beauty, an important feature being the smallness of her feet. They are sold in the capital for wives and yatows (slave children); they are rarely sold into prostitution. For the parents, seeing their children must be doomed to poverty, think it better at once to let the soul escape in search of a more happy asylum than to linger in one condemned to want and wretchedness. The infanticide is, however, exclusively confined to the destruction of female children, the sons being permitted to live in order to continue the ancestral sacrifices. One mother I met, who was employed by the mission, told the missionary in ordinary conversation that she had suffocated in turn three of her female children within a few days of birth; and, when a fourth was born, so enraged was her husband to discover that it was also a girl that he seized it by the legs and struck it against the wall and killed it. Whatever the relative frequency of infanticide in China and Europe may be, it cannot, I think, admit of question that the crime of infanticide is less common among the barbarian Chinese than is the crime of foeticide [abortion] among the highly civilized races of Europe and America.

Source this document by writing a **SENTENCE OF SOURCING** and a **SENTENCE OF ANALYSIS** explaining the relevance of one of the following:

Historical Situation—**I**ntended **A**udience—**P**oint of View—**P**urpose—**wh**Y the sourcing affects your use of the document.