RURAL POVERTY AND ITS IMPACT IN SHEN CONGWEN’S SHORT STORY THE HUSBAND

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ABSTRACT

Shen Congwen (1902-1988) is a modern Chinese author and poet who is known for his native-soil literature (xiangtu wenxue). The short story The Husband (Zhangfu, 1930) is one of his works in native-soil literature. It tells a story about the character “Husband” who lived as a peasant in the barren and poor Huang Village. Like other husbands in the village, he sent his wife to work in the city to improve the family finances. At the end of the story, the character “Husband” decided to take his wife home to the village after he witnessed firsthand the life in the city and how his wife worked. This study examines how Shen Congwen discussed rural poverty and its impact on Huang Village. This study uses an intrinsic approach that focuses on the description of the social situation and the characterization presented by Shen in the short story. It is then strengthened with the description of the social condition happening in China outside of the literary works. The study finds that the main problem that caused the husbands to send their wives to work in the city is poverty and their desire to improve family finances. The root cause of the poverty is the barren village land and the tax to be paid by the villagers for the upper class. Shen sympathized with the villagers by telling the story of “Husband” and the events happening in the short story to reveal the disarray in 1930’s China.

KEYWORDS: Short Story “The Husband”, Shen Congwen, Rural Poverty, Upper-Class People, Social Condition

INTRODUCTION

Shen Yue Huan (1902-1988) better known by his pen name Shen Congwen is one of the popular modern Chinese novelists, short story writers, and poets. Shen Congwen is among the top
modern Chinese writers including Lao She, Bing Xin, Bajin, Ding Ling, Wu Zuxiang, and others. According to Göran Malmqvist from Swedish Academy\(^1\), Shen Congwen was in line to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988, but he, unfortunately, had died before he could be honoured with the prize. Shen wrote numerous works exposing power abuse done by the military groups in villages and the hypocrisy and arrogance of the bourgeoisie in big cities. His works reveal the sufferings and the strength of the commoners (Kinkley, 2004: xiv).

Shen Congwen published more than 200 short stories and 10 novels, many of them are based on Shen’s life experience as a soldier (McDougall & Louie, 1997: 126). Shen Congwen is known as a writer of native-soil literature (乡土文学xiangtu wenxue)\(^2\). Shen and xiangtu concept are inseparable (Jin, 2014: 33). According to Jiang Chenghao (2019), most of Shen’s works are based on characters of the commoners in West Hunan. He used his memory of his hometown and turned the joy and sorrow of the commoners into the background of his story, and presented different life circumstances and conditions in a pure and beautiful manner. By recounting West Hunan as he knew it in his childhood in writing, Shen succeeds in creating “West Hunan World” Xiangxi Shijie, a poetic and beautiful world in the history of Chinese modern literature. Through his works, Shen expressed his appreciation for the beauty of human nature and showed the purity of the human soul (Zhu, 2016:18).

Shen Congwen is known for his famous novel The Border Town (Bian Cheng) published in 1934. Besides Bian Cheng, Shen also produced numerous famous works including The Husband (Zhangfu), Long River (Chang He), Xiao Xiao (Xiao Xiao), Sansan (San San), Husband Wife (Fu Fu), Little White Sheep (Xiao Bai Yang), Light (Deng), Long Zhu (Long Zhu) (Li, 2014: 26). The short story The Husband (Zhangfu) (1930) is also categorized as native-soil literature (xiangtu wenxue) (from here on, it will be referred to as the short story The Husband). The short story The Husband tells the story of the character “Zhangfu” or “Husband”, one of the residents in Huang Village whose majority of the population worked as peasants. The lives of peasants in Huang Village were not easy, the land there was barren, and they had to give up more than half of their harvest to the people referred to as “upper-class people” (shangmian de ren) in the short story. The villagers had to settle for eating only rice husks mixed with sweet potato leaves to satisfy their hunger. The husbands in Huang Village then sent their wives to the city to work for extra money. Similar to other husbands in Huang Village, the character “Husband”, who is the main character in the short story, also sent his wife named Lao Qi to work in the city. When “Husband” missed his wife who cannot return home, he decided to visit his wife who worked in a boat.

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\(^1\) Swedish Academy (Swedish: Svenska Akademien). Since 1901 this institution has had the authority to choose Nobel Laureates in literature. [https://www.svenskaakademien.se/en](https://www.svenskaakademien.se/en)

\(^2\) The term xiangtu wenxue first appeared in the 1920s and was later designated by Lu Xun as a literature category in the introduction of the book Zhongguo Xin Wenxue Daxi volume 2 (Dolezelova-Velingerova & Karl, 2001: 247). Xiangtu Wenxue refers to works that are loaded with rural themes.
“Husband”’s visit opened his eyes to the work done by his wife. During his short visit, the “Husband” witnessed how his wife sold her body and the things that his wife had to experience while working in the boat.

The study of the short story *The Husband* was carried out by Chen Youming (2004). Chen discussed the intrinsic elements of the short story *The Husband*. He divided his study into four chapters. The first and second chapters briefly analyze the emotional changes experienced by the character “Husband”. The third chapter discusses the writing style and techniques used by Shen Congwen in the short story. The fourth chapter discusses Chen Youming’s view after reading the short story *The Husband*. Chen’s study states that one of the unique aspects of the short story *The Husband* is Chen’s wit in using comedic nuances to express a tragedy.

Song Guiyou (2006) argued that the major theme of the short story *The Husband* is the search of “Husband”’s identity. Song wrote that by sending his wife to do “business” by selling her body, “Husband” lost his identity. According to Song, “Husband”’s identity-seeking process is more about a process of finding oneself because the search of “Husband”’s identity carries deeper meaning: the search of hospitality, purity, and the simplicity of one’s “hometown”.

Li Dingchun and Yang Xiayu (2017) discussed in their article several interpretations and studies of the short story *The Husband* done by scholars. They quoted the works of the scholars which were published in *Appreciations of Famous Literary Works* (*Mingzu Xinxang*) as the data. Li and Yang’s discussion is merely about a general summary and not a detailed review of the studies of the scholars, and also not a study of the short story *The Husband* in particular.

Overall, the studies above focused on the discussion of the character “Husband”, such as husband’s emotional changes, the loss of husband’s identity, and the search for husband’s identity. There is one thing that I consider important but have not been discussed, namely the main reason the husband decided to send his wife to work in the city. Li and Yang’s studies mentioned that the poverty is the reason behind the husband’s action to send his wife working in the city. The root cause of poverty among the residents of Huang Village was not discussed.

I found that Shen Congwen through the main character “Husband” intends to highlight the rural poverty that befalls Huang Village. This study will reveal the root cause of poverty in Huang Village that made the husbands send their wives to work in the city for extra money. This study examines the intrinsic elements including the characterization and social condition presented by Shen in the short story *The Husband*. The discussion will also be supported by the description of the social situation happening in China acquired from some data outside of the literary work.
ANALYSIS

1. THE VILLAGE’S CONDITION

1.1. Barren Land

地方实在太穷了 (236)

the land is indeed very barren

The majority of Huang Village’s residents were peasants. For peasants, the quality of land holds a crucial role in their livelihood. In the short story, it is told that the land in Huang Village was barren and causing poor yields.

1.2. Taxes to be Paid

Despite the poor land conditions, the people of Huang Village, especially the men, still worked hard to cultivate the land which was the only hope they could do to survive. However, no matter how hard people worked on the land, the harvest could never make them live properly. In the end, the people of Huang Village remained deprived and destitute. Apart from the fact that the land was poor that the yields were low, the poverty also cannot be separated from the interference of the people who in the story are referred to as “upper-class people”.

一点点收成照例要被上面的人拿去一大半，手足贴地的乡下人，任你如何勤省耐劳的干做，一年中四分之一时间，即或用红薯叶和糠灰拌和充饥，总还是不容易对付下去。 (236)

and more than a half of their poor harvest, as usual, would be taken by the upper-class people. No matter how hard they worked to cultivate the land, the village residents’ hands and feet were tied to the land, three months in a year, although they ate rice husks mixed with sweet potato leaves to satisfy their hunger, it was still not easy to make ends meet.
1.3. Common Phenomenon: Sending Wives to the City

The poverty that afflicted the people of Huang Village forced the local residents to find ways to get additional income apart from farming. The solution adopted by young husbands in Huang Village was by involving their wives in earning a living, by sending them to work in the city.

所以许多年青的丈夫，在娶媳妇以后，把她送出来，自己留在家中耕田种地，安分过日子，也竟是极其平常的事情。(232)

Therefore, a lot of young husbands, after getting married, later sent his wives away (to work), while the husband stayed home, barely made a living and cultivated the land (farming), this was a very common thing.

Husbands sending their wives to the city to work were a very common phenomenon done by husbands in Huang Village. This was to earn extra money to improve family finances. The husbands generally did not mind as their “property” rights to their wives and children remained, and the husbands even enjoyed the extra money earned by the wives. This way, the economic responsibility of the family shifted to the wife. The wife became the breadwinner to support the family.

(1) 他们从乡下来，从那些种田挖园的人家，离了乡村，离了石磨小牛，离了那年轻而强健的丈夫，跟随了一个同乡熟人，就来到这船上做生意了。(230)

They came from the village, from peasant families, left their village, left their stone mill and calf, left their young husbands who were strong and healthy, to join people from the same village that they know very well, came to these boats to do business.

(2) 地方虽在山中，离大河码头只三十里，天于习惯，女子出村讨生活，男人通明白这做生意的一切利益。他懂事，女人名分仍然归他，养得儿子归他，有了钱，也总有一部分归他。” (236)
Although located in mountains, only 30 li from the river pier, it was common for women to leave their village to earn a living, and the men understood all the benefits of doing the business. He understood very well, that by status, his wife would still be his, the children she raised would also be his, after she got the money, he would always get his share."

(3) 事情非常简单，一个不亟亟于生养孩子的妇人，到了城市，能够每月把从城市里两个晚上所得的钱，送给那留在乡下诚实耐劳、种田为生的丈夫，在那方面就过了好日子，名分不失，利益存在。(230;232)

It is all so simple, a wife that did not hurry to bear and raise a child, when she arrived in the city, every month she could send the money she earned for two nights in the city to her honest and hard-working husband who cultivated the land in the village. From that side, they could live in comfort. The husband could get additional money, and he was still the legal husband of his wife.

2. THE REALITY THAT “HUSBAND” SAW IN THE CITY

The character “Husband” written by Shen Congwen was one of the husbands from Huang Village. This character does not have a name, and it is only referred to as “Zhangfu” or “Husband”. Similar to the husbands in his village, he sent her wife named Lao Qi to work in the city. His wife worked “doing business” in a boat that usually docks on the banks of the river in the city.

The character “Husband”, who is the main character in the short story, is depicted a little different from the husbands in Huang Village in general. It is shown by how “Husband” came to the city, intending to visit his wife who could not return to the village. In her workplace, “Husband” gradually witnessed things that bothered his mind and started to feel relentless.

2.1. The Changes in The Wife

这时节，女人在丈夫眼下自然已完全不同了。(232)

For by now, naturally in her husband's eyes the wife had changed out of all recognition.
Once in the city and met Lao Qi, “Husband” was surprised to see the changes in his wife. After working in the city, Lao Qi was no longer like the Lao Qi he knew in the village. Both Lao Qi’s appearance and manner seemed to follow the style of the city people. These were the changes in wives seen by “Husband” in terms of appearance and speech:

大而油光的发髻, 用小镊子扯成的细细眉毛, 脸上的白粉同绯红胭脂, 以及那城市里人神气派头, 城市里人的衣服, 都一定使从乡下来的丈夫感到极大的惊讶, 有点手足无措。那呆相是女人很容易清楚的。女人到后开了口, 或者问: “那次五块钱得了么?” 或者问: “我们那对猪养儿子了没有?” 女人说话时口音自然也完全不同了, 变成象城市里做太太的大方自由, 完全不是在乡下做媳妇的羞涩畏缩神气了。(232)

The big shiny hair bun, the thin eyebrows plucked using tiny tweezers, white powder and bright red blushes on her face, and the atmosphere and style of city people, all of these things surely make “Husband” who was from the village feel greatly surprised, slightly dazed. The wife understood that very easily. The wife then opened the conversation by asking: “have you received the money, the five kuai?” or asked: “has our pig gave birth?” When her wife spoke, her accent was completely different, changed into the generous and free style of city ladies, completely different from the shy and timid wives from the village.

From the quote above, it is clear that in “Husband”’s eyes, his wife drastically changed. Lao Qi is no longer a village woman who was shy and timid. She had changed into a city woman who is generous and free.

2.2. The Treatment of the Guests to the Wife

During his stay for three days and two nights in the boat where his wife worked, “Husband” met the guests of the boat. “Husband” finally saw how his wife worked in the boat, serving the coming guests. He finally realized that his wife earned money from prostitution. In the boat, “Husband” witnessed with his own eyes the mistreatment of the guests to his wife.
Madam (the pimp) was so confused, her mouth gaping in fear. Lao Qi frantically grabs the drunken soldier and placed it over her breast. The soldier seemed to understand and sat back down. “Alright. Fine. I can give you more money. I'll spend the night here!” … He sang two lines from an opera … After that the drunken soldier laid down on Lao Qi’s left, his friend silently laid down on Lao Qi’s right.”

The following is the depiction of the mistreatment of the wife’s guests who used their power and authority to their personal pleasure of spending the night with Lao Qi:

- **River Warden (水保shui bao)**

  River warden is the person who is responsible for various affairs and has the highest position in the river area. He is the “godfather” (干爹gan die) of many prostitutes there.

  (1) 水保是个独眼睛的人。这独眼据说在年青时因殴斗杀过一个水上恶人，
  因为杀人，同时也就被人把眼睛抠瞎了。但两只眼睛不能分明的，他一
  只眼睛却办到了。一个河里都由他管事。他的权力在这些小船上，比一个
  中国的皇帝、总统在地面上的权力还统一集中。(236)

  The river warden was a man who only had one eye. Rumor had it that this one-
  eyed man was involved in a fight with a criminal in the river when he was young
  and killed him, that is why he also lost an eye because of that man. However,
  he seemed to see clearer with one eye than with two. He was in charge of the
  river. His power over these small boats was more integrated and concentrated
  compared to that of the Emperor and the President of China had over the land.
A river warden was the ruler of the river, there was no matter related to the river area that he did not know.

The character “Husband” first met the river warden when he was on patrol checking the boats. When the river warden visited Lao Qi’s boat, he cannot find Lao Qi, the pimp, and Wuduo. He instead met a stranger who claims to be Lao Qi’s husband from the village. At first, “Husband” was timid and stuttered when talking to the river warden, but after the river warden asked him about his life in the village, “Husband” gradually dared to tell him stories.

Because of the chestnut, the young man who cannot speak finally gained sympathy. Everything he knew about his village, he told them to the river warden.

The “Husband” thought that the river warden really understood him, hence he kept on talking about everything. Even his hopes to have a baby next year, the things that are more suitable to be discussed in bed with his wife were also discussed by him.

“Husband” finally found someone who can sympathize with him. The river warden also treated “Husband” well, he even invited “Husband” to have dinner together as a friend. After the river warden left the boat, “Husband” started to rethink the meaning of the message the river warden left for Lao Qi.
Relentlessness grew in the heart. The waist pocket that seemed like full of money, so arrogant, reappeared before his eyes, and it seized his peace of mind. The square, red, orange peel face expression, that now looked like it was made of wine and dark blood, had become hatred for him, a gaze that now burnt his memory. And what is the point of remembering? He could still remember the order, sent to his face – her husband! “Tell her to not receive any guest tonight. I am coming.” To hell with that, rude words straight out of his big mouth! Why did he have to say that? What’s the reason he said that?

At first, “Husband” had no problem with the message from the river warden, he was too happy because he was considered as a friend by the river warden. However, after ruminating the words of the river warden, “Husband” finally realized what the message means. If you pay close attention, the sentence above has an ambiguous meaning. The sentence said by the river warden implies, “because I am coming, I forbid you to allow other people to visit, only I can meet Lao Qi tonight.” As the person who had power over the boats in the area, the river warden acted capriciously. He used his power as an authority in the river area, without any reluctance to dare to say the sentence in front of “Husband”. This action indicates that the river warden did not respect “Husband” as Lao Qi’s legitimate husband. Lao Qi was still “Husband”’s lawful wife. After being angry with his assumption, “Husband” had decided to return to the village. However, once again he was discouraged because his wife persuaded him to stay in the boat.

- Patrolmen

The group of officers led by the river warden comes by at midnight. They were the patrolmen from the center who were in charge of searching the boats on the docks to find suspicious people because of the frequent theft incident. There were four heavily armed officers keeping guard outside of the boat, while the river warden and the patrolmen leader went inside.
The pimp woke “Husband” up from his sleep and pulled him out. After finishing the search, they went to the next boat. Suddenly, a patrolman returned to give the pimp a message to Lao Qi:

“大娘，你告老七，巡官要回来过细考察她一下，你懂不懂？”

“Madam (the pimp), please tell Lao Qi that our officer will come back for a more in-depth search. Understand?”

大娘说，“就来么？”

The pimp answers “Is he coming now?”

“查完夜就来。”

“Later, after he finishes the patrol.”

“当真吗？”

“Seriously?”

“我什么时候同你这老婊子说过谎？ (264;266)

“Have I ever lied to you, you old bitch?”

There is no explanation as to what the patrol officer meant by “in-depth search” to Lao Qi. Even so, it can be concluded that the patrol officer intended to “book” Lao Qi for the night; thus, taking away “Husband” chance to spend the night with his wife again.

2.3. The Appearance of Huang Village’s Important Person in the Boat

Since the first night “Husband” stayed in the boat where Lao Qi worked, their boat had received a guest. It was Lao Qi’s first guest seen by “Husband” since he arrived. In the eyes of “Husband”, the guest’s appearance looked like a boat owner or a merchant, and he had some characteristics that remind “Husband” to an important person in his village.
there came a guest, probably a boat owner or a merchant, wearing boots made of cowhide leather, holding the corner of his pocket that revealed a thick and shiny silver chain, he drank a lot of Shao wine (white wine) and staggered aboard the boat. Once he got on he shouted loudly asking for a kiss on his lips and wanting to sleep. His loud and arrogant voice, and his behavior, reminded “Husband” to the head of the village and the important people in his village.

The quote above illustrates that the style and the voice of the guests first seen by “Husband” on the boat reminded him of the head of the village or the important person in his village. This memory made him feel that this guest is someone who holds a high position. This makes “Husband” felt reluctant. The reluctance is shown in this depiction:

So, the “Husband”, without being told, immediately knew that he had to sneak to the rear cabin, hid at the end of the rear cabin with his breath held. While taking off the cigarettes on his lips, he then saw the sight of the twilight in the river aimlessly.

3. “HUSBAND”’S FINAL DECISION

His first intention to visit his wife triggered by the feeling of longing gradually changed after witnessing how his wife worked in the city and seeing the things that his wife had to face in her workplace. On the third day of his visit to the city, “Husband” can no longer hold his feelings, and finally decided to come back to his village and bring his wife, Lao Qi, home.
一定要走了，老七很为难，走出船走到船头呆了一会，回身从荷包里掏出昨晚上那兵士给的票子来，点了一下数，一共四张，捏成一把塞到男子左手心里去。男子无话说，老七似乎懂到那意思了，“大娘，你拿那三张也把我。”大娘将钱取出，老七又把这钱塞到男子右手心里去。(268)

Husband was determined to leave; Lao Qi was in dilemma. She got off the boat for a while, she turned back and took out the pay given by the soldier last night from her purse, counted it, four in total. She put one of them on the left hand of the man. "Husband" did not say anything. Lao Qi seemed to understand the "Husband"’s silence, and said: “Madam, please give me the other three.” The pimp took out the money, and Lao Qi put the money into the man’s right hand.

The pimp’s invitation to watch the opera, the invitation to a feast by the river warden had all gone unnoticed. The money given by his wife could no longer make him stay.

男子摇摇头，把票子撒到地下去，两只大而粗的手掌捣着脸孔，象小孩子那样莫名其妙的哭了起来。(268)

The man shook his head and threw the money on the ground. His big and thick hands were pressed against his face, and he suddenly cried like a child.

At the end of the story when the river warden came to the boat intending to take “Husband” to the feast he had promised, the river warden could not find “Husband” and Lao Qi. The events experienced by “Husband” during his stay to the city finally prompted “Husband” to take Lao Qi home to the village, leaving the boat where she earned extra money.

The event when “Husband” cried and threw away the money from his wife can be interpreted as “Husband”’s remorse for letting his wife working in the city. The reality of the wife’s life and livelihood witnessed by the character “Husband”, who happens to be able to visit his wife in the city, finally prompted him to take her home to the village. This is the representation of the feelings of the husbands who are not willing to let their wives working in the city if they find out about their job. It is an occupation that he had never thought of before when he was in the village.
4. **WHO IS THE UPPER-CLASS PEOPLE (上面的人SHANGMIAN DE REN)?**

4.1. From the Short Story

一点点收成照例要被上面的人拿去一大半。(236)

and more than a half of their low yields were seized by the **upper-class people**, as usual.

The narrative pieces about the “upper-class people” in the short story do not clearly refer to anyone. The “upper-class people” likely refers to the people who have power and higher position than the local residents who can make them gave up their yields.

Besides that, there is also the word *zhaoli* (照例) in the quote which means “as usual” in the sentence “and more than half of their low yields, were seized by the upper-class people, as usual.” This indicates that at that time, the residents were forced to pay taxes not only once or twice but repeatedly and regularly.

In the short story, as explained in point 2.3, the description of the wife’s guests in terms of their appearance, style, manner, and accent reminded “Husband” to the head of the village and powerful people in his village. Through this statement, Shen Congwen seemed to illustrate that the “upper-class people” in Huang Village also appeared in the city, through his wife’s guests.

4.2. China’s Real Condition in the Era

Shen Congwen did not specifically mention the time setting of the short story *The Husband*. Based on the time record when the short story *The Husband* was written, found at the end of the short story, 1930, it can be assumed that the description in the short story will not be far from the real condition at the time. The condition of China at the beginning of the 20th century was indeed unstable. China was not ruled by one particular group, and at that time China did not yet have one strong leader. China, which was previously a monarchy, turned into a republic. When Xinhai Revolution succeeded in overthrowing Qing Dynasty, and Sun Yatsen was appointed as the President of the Republic of China at the beginning of 1912, it did not necessarily free Chinese people from the oppression of their own and foreign nations. At that time, the Warlords were rampant that Sun Yatsen was not able to continue ruling as the President of the Republic of China (Muas, 2015: 82).

The Warlords period occurred between the years 1916 to 1928. These years are close to the time when the short story *The Husband* was written, the year 1930. After the death of Yuan
Shikai\(^3\) in 1916, Chinese people had to survive against a series of internal conflicts caused by the disintegrations of several factions of the Beiyang army that competed for power. These factions were called Warlords. Hundreds and even thousands of Warlords were wide spread in areas across China. Their power varied greatly, as some troops were only consisting of a handful of people, but some troops were fully-armed and consisted of hundreds of people. Because the motivation of the Warlords was power and wealth, some Warlords sometimes acted like bandits and looted their areas. It was difficult to distinguish between Warlords and bandits. Sometimes bandits were in big numbers, similar to Warlords, but the main difference between the two is bandits did not have any rights in an area, while Warlords, on the other hand, could collect taxes (Sardjito, 1987: 12-13).

**CONCLUSION**

The word husband in the short story *The Husband* by Shen Congwen refers to two things; first, to the husbands of Huang Village in general, and second, to the main character of the short story called “Husband”. At the beginning of the story, Shen Congwen’s portrayal of “Husband” is the general image of husbands who usually sent their wives in the city to work as a shortcut to earn extra money to fulfill family needs. Afterward, the portrayal of husband shifts to one character “Husband”, which starts when the character “Husband” visited the city to see his wife, Lao Qi. Similar to husbands in Huang Village in general, “Husband”, the main character of the short story, at the beginning also sent his wife to the city. At the end of the story, the character “Husband” decided to go back and take his wife home after seeing inappropriate things experienced by his wife in the city. The character “Husband” is presented by Shen Congwen as the tool to reveal village life and its problems.

The main problems that cause husbands to send their wives to the city are the poverty and the desire of the village residents to earn extra money for family finances. The root cause of the poverty is the barren village land and taxes paid to the “upper-class people” (*shangmian de ren*). Upper-class people or people in power did not mind that their acts caused the peasants to live in poverty. The “upper-class people” with their power could not only be found in the village, but also in the city, who were represented by the guests that came for Lao Qi. In other words, these “upper-class people” can be found everywhere.

These social problems, if linked to the time when the short story was written, 1930, were likely to refer to the Warlord period (1916—1928). The Warlords at that time had a great desire to maintain and expand their territory. To this end, they tried to collect money by taking local income

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\(^3\)Yuan Shikai is a general in Qing Dynasty. Yuan promised to give up the authority of Qing Dynasty in full to Sun Yatsen by putting forward several conditions from the Qing. Eventually, to prevent bloodshed and worse chaos, Sun Yatsen resigned as the President of the Republic of China and handed it over to Yuan Shikai (Chesneaux, 1977: 7).
received from taxes from the peasants. The short story *The Husband* portrays how the actions of the “upper-class people” impacted the peasants in several ways, which are the increasingly impoverished life of the peasants and the missing role of wives in the family since they had to work in the city as the breadwinner. These points show why Shen Congwen is referred to as native-soil literature (*xiangtu wenxue*) writer. Shen has great sympathy for the village community, and through his writing, he created characters and events happening in the short story *The Husband* to expose the disarray in China in 1930.

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