

# Changes in Labor and Self-Awareness of Women in Fishing Villages of Zhōushān Islands in China:

— Through the Lives and Changes of Yu sao or Women  
in a Fishing Village in Meidao Island —

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The development of the Zhōushān Islands New Area should be centered around maritime culture, which includes the process of forming a maritime society, the development and history of fishery production and rich folk culture passed down from generation to generation in fishing villages. In any fishing village, as a fundamental unit of maritime society, fishery production has been the main income source. We tend to think that the fishing industry predominantly consists of men. Yet, while men go out fishing, women fix fishing nets, buy and sell catches and do most household chores. Even though women greatly help fishermen do their jobs, their economic contribution to the household has been unknown.

Moreover, people in fishing villages are not involved only in fisheries. When fishing villages changed their industrial policies after the Chinese Revolution, women on the Zhōushān Islands expanded their potential by working away from home or starting their own businesses. There were many works in the field of fish processing, fish cultivation, seafood sales, and so on. Among them, the leisure fishing business has become a unique industry on the islands. Women there bring additional income to their families by running fishing-related businesses, and this form of female labor contributes to the economy. Yu sao are expected to play a significant role in the promotion and development of the Zhōushān Islands New Area. How, then, has this shift of focus from Tema to labor affected their self-awareness?

This paper will examine how changes in the participation of the women in the labor force that resulted from changes in the circumstances of fishing villages on the islands have affected their status, self-awareness and attitude toward work since the Chinese Revolution, especially over the three decades after the Chinese Economic Reform.