

WHY DO KOREAN WOMEN DIVE? FROM A VIEWPOINT OF GENDER

Sun-Ae li*

Department of Humanities, Miyazaki Municipal University, Miyazaki, Japan 880-8520. iisune@miyazaki-mu.ac.jp

This study clarifies from a viewpoint of gender about the cultural, ecological and historical backgrounds and mechanism on why Korean women became women divers. Generally, fishery is done by men. However, the harvesting of shells, sea urchins and seaweed is regarded as women's work in Korea. In the spring, to harvest seaweed for export to Japan in the late 19th century, many of Jeju Island women divers came to work in the Korean Peninsula. In those days, there were no women divers in the Korean Peninsula. However, after the Korean War, women from fishing villages were influenced by Jeju Island women divers and have begun to become women divers. In 1993, there were about 10, 000 Korean women divers (Table 1). There are a lot of women divers in the Gyeongsangnamdo fishing village of the South coast in particular. The reason is because a good fishing ground and a big city are adjacent to this area. Most of the women divers work for a living, and are either widows or have a jobless husband (Figure 1). The woman diver supplements her income with other agriculture activities. Her income from diving accounts for about 20% of the annual total income of her family (Figure 2). The Korean women divers feel proud and shameful at the same time about their work. The former is because women divers get a lot of cash income, and the latter is the low social recognition of their work and the risk involved in their job. Besides, women divers do not have the opportunity to reflect and contribute their knowledge on the sea and marine resources for use in government fishery policy planning.

Table 1. The Korean women divers native place and age(1993)

Coast	Province	Native place		Age						Unknown	Total
		Jeju	Native	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s		
East	Gangwondo	269	351	25	74	165	248	23	0	85	620
	Gyeongsangbukdo	53	224	0	30	122	92	31	2	0	277
West	Chungcheongnamdo	154	22	12	50	64	34	16	0	0	176
	Jullabukdo	7	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	7
South	Jullanamdo	105	115	3	64	98	43	11	1	0	220
	Gyeongsangnamdo	1536	1545	88	303	407	347	147	42	1747	3081
	Jejudo	6727	0	143	850	1855	2490	1323	66	0	6727
Total		8851	2257	271	1371	2713	3259	1551	111	1652	11108

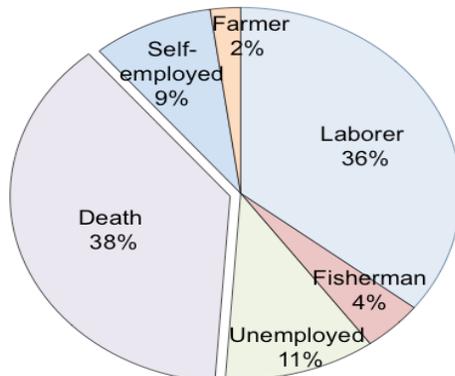


Fig.1 Occupation of women divers' husbands (The case of fishing village of Ulsan, 1995)

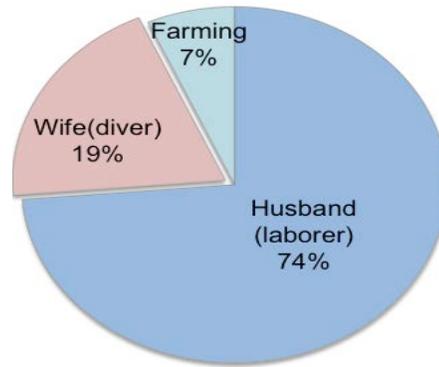


Fig.2 Percentage of an annual income of a woman diver family (Ulsan Korea, 1995)