

Women Divers of Jeju Island Cross the Sea

Sun-Ae II

(Miyazaki Municipal University, Japan)

e-mail: iisune@miyazaki-mu.ac.jp

KEY WORDS : woman diver, life strategy, migration, use resources, national boundary

INTRODUCTION

This paper, with minor modifications, is based on my doctoral dissertation, An Ethnological Study on Migration and Settlement of Jeju Island Women Divers in Korea and Japan, presented at The Department of Comparative Studies, the School of Cultural Studies of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies in March 1998.

Although a large number of studies reporting on the physical faculties, tools, skills, geographical distribution, and social organization of woman divers have been conducted, few interpretations of their lives have been made from a holistic point of view. Between Japan and Jeju Island, for example, there is a long history of migration of women divers, but studies from historical documents have never dealt with the divers' actual lives.

The present study has two primary purposes. One is to reconstruct the historical process of their migration and settlement in the contemporary era. The other is to explain their utilization of marine resources and their actual lives in Korea and Japan, that is to say, their adaptation to different ecological, social and cultural environments. In my thesis, I described and analyzed the process of their adaptation using the concept of a life strategy, which is defined as a general term expressing positive activity by human beings when they adapt themselves to an ecological or social environment. Since Bennett proposed this theory in 1969, it has been used for analyzing the activity of small groups such as hunter-gatherers.

First of all, I reconstructed their life stories, based on historical documents. Next, the history of their migration and settlement was investigated by fieldwork to reach an understanding of their actual lives. The fieldwork was carried out for 16 months (1993-1995) at Ulsan Jujeon-dong (1 year), Tsushima (6 weeks), Jeju Island (1 week), and the Boso Peninsula (1 week). Especially, in terms of their life history, many detailed documents were gathered by making use of two languages, Japanese and Korean.

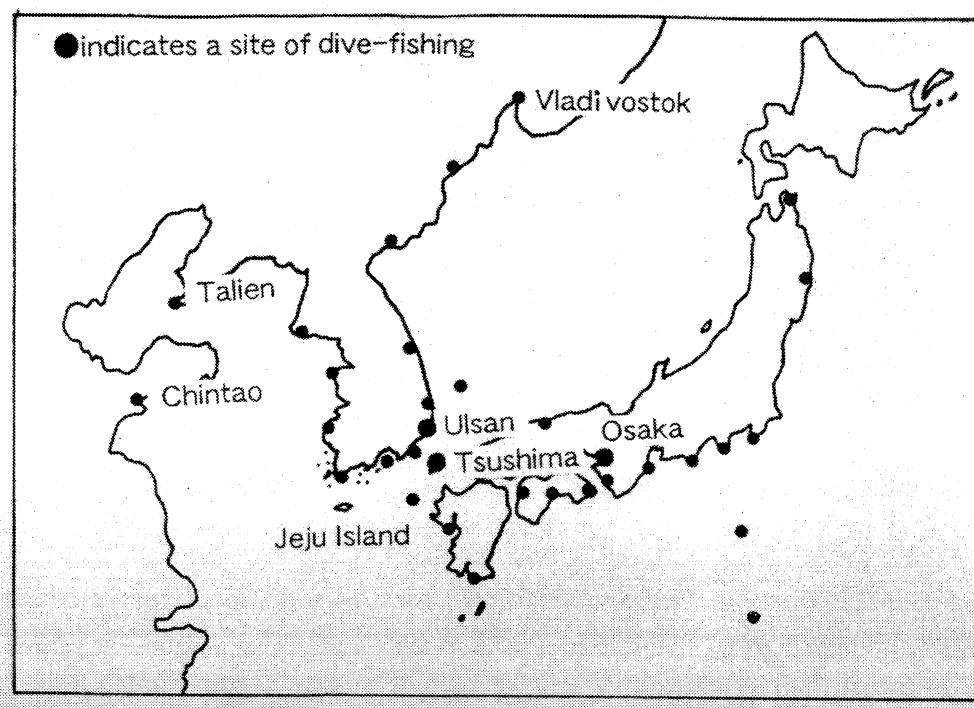
There are three important points in this paper. First, the paper synthetically describes the divers' lives including their history, ecology, and social organization on the basis of concrete materials that were obtained through fieldwork. Second is the presentation of a new hypothesis that these migrant divers have become the core members in forming current woman diver groups in Korea. Third, although women divers are generally considered to be a marginal socioeconomic group, they are considered in the present study East Asian coastal people who easily cross the national boundaries, including social and cultural barriers, by using migration and settlement strategies.

In the paper, I used the life history of Jeju Island women divers who live in Japan and Korea as primary materials and paid attention to conflicts over their rights and ownership privileges at fishing areas occurring in the process of their migration and settlement.

KOREAN WOMAN DIVER'S FORMATION

Move of the Jeju Island Women Divers over East Asia

I would like to show how the women divers in Jeju Island have spread over East Asia and what kind of influence they have given on other Korean women divers (Map 1). Investigation on Korean women divers made clear that the formation of modern Korean woman diver groups originated with Jeju Island women divers (Table 1, 2). In the background of this development exists the drastic changes in Korean society resulting from Japanese colonial policy. Specifically, the Jeju Island women divers began their active migration to alternative fishing grounds and adoption of new techniques under the influence of Japanese fishing practices (Table 3). They then, in some cases, began to replace Japanese women divers as they



Map 1. Jeju Island and other sites of diving (1895-1945)

Table 1. Birthplace of Korean women divers (1993)

Work Places	Bithplace			Sum Total
	Jeju	Other places	Unknown	
The eastern sea				
Gangwondo	269	351	0	620
Gyeongsanbukdo	53	224	0	277
The western sea				
Chungcheongnamdo	154	22	0	176
Jeollabukdo	7	0	0	7
The southern sea				
Jeollanamdo	105	115	0	220
Gyeongsangnamdo	540	545	1,567	2,652
Busan	-	-	429	429
Jeju Isalnd	6,727	0	0	6,727
Sum total	7,855	1,257	1,996	11,108

Table 2. Age of Korean women divers (1993)

Work Places	Age							Sum Total
	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	Unknown	
The eastern sea								
Gangwondo	25	74	165	248	23	0	85	620
Gyeongsanbukdo	0	30	122	92	31	2	0	277
The western sea								
Chungcheongnamdo	12	50	64	34	16	0	0	176
Jeollabukdo	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	7
The southern sea								
Jeollanamdo	3	64	98	43	11	1	0	220
Gyeongsangnamdo	78	226	242	200	117	42	1,747	2,652
Busan	10	77	165	147	30	0	0	429
Jeju Island	143	850	1855	2490	1323	66	0	6,727
Sum total	271	1371	2713	3259	1551	111	1,832	11,108

Table 3. Places of migration of Jeju Island women divers (in the 1930s)

Korea			Japan		
	The number of people	(%)		The number of people	(%)
Hamgyeongbukdo	8	0.12	Chibaken	66	1.40
Hamgyeongnamdo	44	0.93	Kanagawaken	228	4.82
Hwanghedo	48	1.02	Shizuokaken	233	4.93
Gangwondo	212	4.49	Mieken	60	1.30
Chungcheongnamdo	76	1.61	Tokushimaken	105	2.22
Jeollabukdo	38	0.80	Kouchiken	180	3.81
Jeollanamdo	592	12.53	Ehimeken	5	0.10
Gyeongsangbukdo	337	7.14	Kagoshimaken	83	1.80
Gyeongsangnamdo	1640	34.72	Nagasakiken	63	1.33
			Tsushima	705	14.93
Sum total				4723	(100.00)

moved throughout East Asia. They are divided into two types. One consists of divers who settled in Korea and formed women diver groups after the Japanese defeat in the World War II and the confusion of the Korean War. The other group is primarily a resident in Japan. As shown in this paper, the main reasons for the persistence of these groups are their strong desires to work and their excellent skills.

Ulsan Jujeon-dong Woman Diver's Village

Ulsan Jujeon-dong is a typical woman diver's village composed of about 100 women divers. I describe their economic activities and social relationships using records of the group's organization, tools, catches, calendars and fishing activity. The recording of this data confirmed the significance of their economic activities and their relation to their society. The number of women divers in the village accounts for 98 of the total of 534 women residents. Ulsan Jujeon-dong is positioned on the east coast of Korea where cold water from north and warm water from south are commingled. Ulsan Jujeon-dong consists of four villages, with numerous houses located on the seaside.

By analyzing the record of their life histories in Jeju Island, I would like to describe how the women divers in Korea were formed. In particular, I will show where they settled and how they chose dive-fishing as their occupation. I will also compare the life histories of women divers in Jeju Island with those of women divers in other areas to demonstrate clearly how they were formed.

The history of the formative process of Korean women divers is divided into three periods due to the migration and settlement of Jeju island women divers in Korea. The first period is from 1895 to the 1920s, the first era in which Jeju island women divers left home and began to settle as wagedworkers. The second period is from the 1930s to the 1960s when native Korean women divers who were influenced by Jeju island women divers appeared. The third period extends from 1970s to the present, a period in which Jeju island women divers became recognized members of the fishing community of native women divers. This change is related to social changes in Korea, and includes the Jeju Island women divers' success in obtaining the right to utilize the miyeog (*Undaria pinnatigida*) grounds.

The Miyeok Grounds and Jeju Island Women Divers

Considering the utilization and administration of the fishing grounds, I discuss some of the problems occurring in the process of migration and settlement of Jeju island women divers, including their utilization and administration of the miyeog grounds. The historical development of women divers in Ulsan Jujeon-dong was compared with that in other areas.

It is pointed out that Jeju island women divers had a great effect on the utilization and administration of the miyeog grounds and that miyeog gathering is a very important factor in determining their migration and settlement patterns. I propose two categories regarding their administration and utilization rights of the miyeog grounds through the study of its historical development and in comparison with that of other areas. I also discuss its influence on their migration and settlement.

In the first category, the miyeog grounds are utilized and administered by individuals, and the owners or women divers who are employed by them collect the miyeog. The women divers do not have any rights for utilization and administration and are considered wageworkers who make a contract with administrators.

In the second category, the miyeog grounds are utilized and administered by mutual aid of fishing unions or villages. The ground is divided into eight small area and they are fairly allocated to women divers by lot. While some women divers are wage workers, there is a possibility that they join in the mutual aid fishing unions or are positively involved in the miyeog gathering to gain the right to administer their own fishing grounds. Ulsan Jujeon-dong is included in this category. It is also suggested that the existence of a community that administers and shares the miyeog grounds is an important factor in their settlement.

I also discuss the relationship of Jeju Island women divers and local people through their life histories, citing several concrete cases, for example, including a conflict between the Jeju Island women divers and the native people who own miyeog grounds or belong to the fishing union.

THE JEJU ISLAND WOMEN DIVERS IN JAPAN

I analyze the way in which women divers obtained fishing rights and adapted to society in Japan that has different fishing rules and a different cultural background from Korea, referring mainly to the case of Tsushima Island. I suggest that the women divers history can be classified into three periods: (1) the period of working away in Taisho era; (2) the period of increase following the World War II; and (3) the period of decline which began in the 1970s. In particular, they faced problems concerning their migration to Japan, adapting to different fishing rules and a cultural background very different from Korea, including the need to learn new technologies such as compressor, competition with Japanese native divers, or the shortage of children's jobs. It became evident that the process of their adaptation to the above-mentioned problems has been highly influenced by ecological, political, and economical factors.

I also researched their life style in the Boso Peninsula, the Shima Peninsula and Osaka by hearing their life histories and comparing various individual narratives. At the Boso Peninsula it was found that they cooperated with native Japanese fishermen and settled down in the community. They migrated to the Shima Peninsula making use of a Jeju people's network in Osaka. Osaka has a special characteristic in that Jeju people tend to gather there, and it was found that some women divers commuted to the sea and back on a daily basis, while others had changed their occupation. It was proved that there exist strong Jeju peoples' social networks, which include efforts by the members to maintain good relationships with Jeju Island.

LIFE STRATEGY OF THE JEJU ISLAND WOMEN DIVERS

Jeju Island women divers who live in Ulsan Jujeon-dong are compared with those who live in Tsushima. I describe the differences in their adaptations (what kind of life style they choose, and how the ecological and social environments restrict them), and examine these differences using so-called life strategy model.

From this point of view, it was discovered that at Ulsan Jujeon-dong they choose a settlement strategy where the working area is the living area, but at Tsushima they choose a

migration strategy where the working area is located far from their living area. The differences between these two life strategies in each category (fishing styles, fishing areas, operation hours, main targets, utensils, side jobs etc.) were compared as follows.

The biggest difference between the two regions is that Ulsan Jujeon-dong is a farming and fishing village but Tsushima is just a fishing village. While the working area is living area at Ulsan Jujeon-dong, the fishing area is different from living area at Tsushima where they move between the two areas. Ulsan Jujeon-dong and Tsushima make a remarkable contrast and I use the term "settlement strategy" to express the life style at Ulsan Jujeon-dong and the term "migration strategy" to express the life style at Tsushima. Using these strategies, I inspected the life style of Jeju Island women divers all over Japan.

The life style adopted at the Boso Peninsula is the "settlement strategy". They keep a tight relationship each other and they also keep a tight relationship with Jeju Island people particularly through their festival, which is quite different from Ulsan Jujeon-dong people. At the Shima Peninsula they change working area and living area every season. Their life style is the "migration strategy" which is more remarkable than Tsushima. In Osaka their living area is close to working area, that is why their life style seems to be "settlement strategy". However, it may be considered to be migration strategy, because, strictly speaking, the areas are not the same.

JEJU ISLAND WOMEN DIVERS AND NATIONAL BOUNDARY

I focused attention on the women divers' social environment using the idea of discrimination and national boundaries that are present as a background factor in their life strategy choices.

In Korea, Jeju Island women divers used to suffer discrimination that is originated from historical, cultural and Confucian custom. They faced up to these problems positively by getting fishing rights, marrying with native people, and providing a high standard of education to their children. At Ulsan Jujeon-dong they also succeeded in getting fishing rights in common with native people. But native women who became divers to earn a big income still have bad feelings against Jeju Island women divers. In Japan, although people discriminate less

specifically against them as Jeju Islanders, they are still subject to the discrimination against all Korean residents which remains a social factor all over Japan.

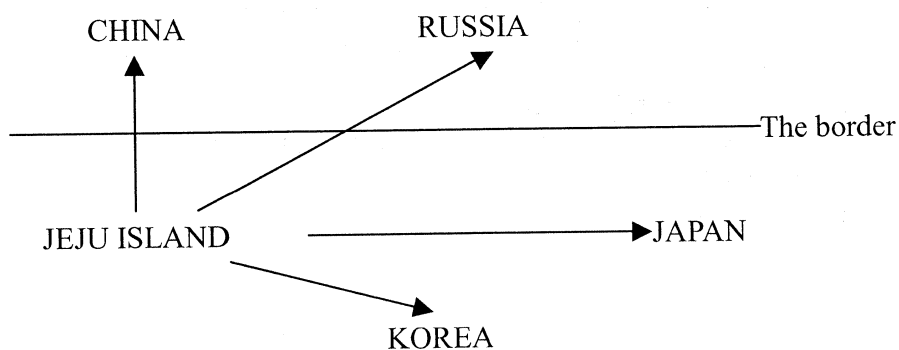
Jeju Island women divers have migrated all over East Asia. Their migration is divided into three periods as follows (Figure 1):

The first period is from 1895 to 1945 (free migration). The second period is from 1945 to the 1960s (local migration). The third period extends from the 1970s to the present (international migration). In the first period, national boundaries were unclear because of the political situation. Jeju Island women divers freely migrated to various areas including China, Russia and Japan as well as Korea. However, in the second period, national boundaries were determined and it was impossible to migrate freely so they were restricted to migration within Korea. In those days, many Korean smuggled themselves into Japan. In the third period, they began to migrate to Hong Kong and Japan. They continue to migrate to Japan illegally. These patterns can be best described in terms of the three periods of migration.

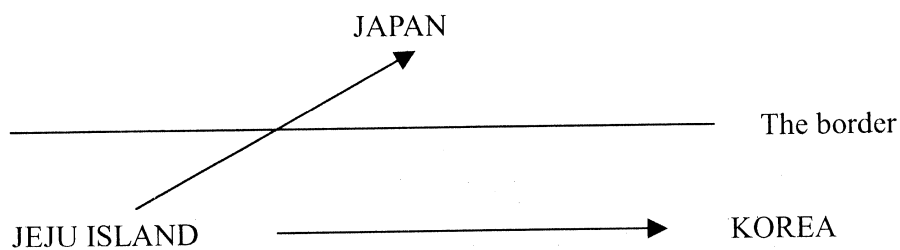
Their migration can be explained by a demand for their special skills and the high value of the products that they gather. Other reasons include the economic gap between Japan and Korea and the network of Jeju island people formed before the World War II. Jeju Island serves as a place for cultural identity, Osaka as a living place, and Tsushima as a working place (Figure 2). Jeju women divers cross the border in migrating among these three places seasonally, and they cross the border and go back to Jeju Island whenever they want. The reason why they go back from Osaka to Jeju Island is to visit their ancestors' graves and their relatives. They move from Tsushima to Jeju Island for the same reasons and also to farm their orange fields in the winter. Some of the Jeju Island women divers go to Osaka from Tsushima in the winter to visit their relatives, then move to Tsushima from Osaka in the spring and stay there through the summer to do dive-fishing.

Under these conditions, they have their own feelings about national borders different from other Koreans. Actually they have complicated conflicts against the borders in their hearts. They accept life in Japan where they can achieve economic well-being, but they also try to keep a relationship with Jeju Island. They hope to be buried in Jeju Island at their death. As a matter of fact, their life between two countries sometimes causes some problems concerning the inheritance of ancestor worship.

FREE MIGRATION : before WW II (1895-1945)



LOCAL MIGRATION : after WW II (1945-1970)



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION : Present-day (1971-1995)

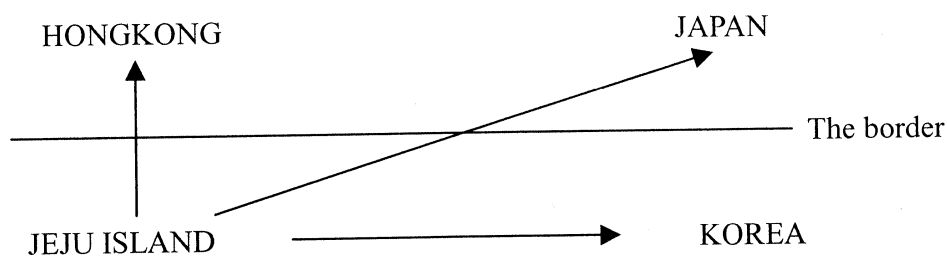


Figure 1. History of Migration (1895-1995)

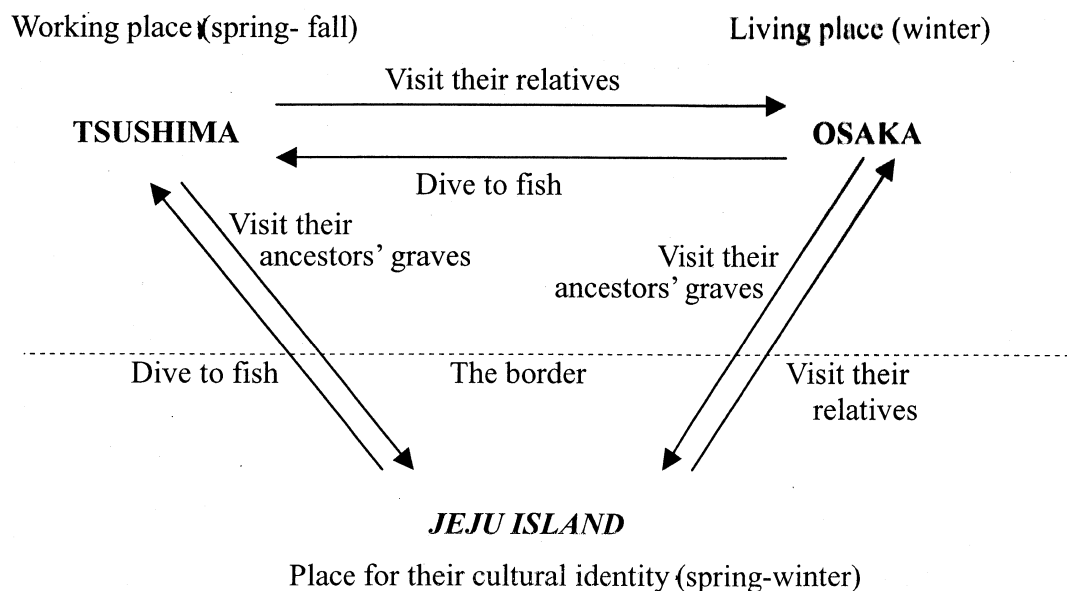


Figure 2. Recent migration pattern in Japan

CONCLUSION

In summary, this article has reconstructed the process of migration and settlement of Jeju island women divers and described their life histories in Ulsan Jujeon-dong, Tsushima, the Shima Peninsula and the Boso Peninsula to clarify their utilization of marine resources and to describe their actual life conditions in Korea and Japan, that is to say, their adaptation to ecological, social and cultural environments.

I also consider the effect of discrimination and national boundaries as factors that inevitably influence their decisions and the characteristics of their migration and settlement activities. I have referred to the problems regarding the migration of Jeju island women divers and their utilization of marine resources. Future studies should include further comparative research within East Asia. The problems of utilization and ownership in the miyeok grounds can be recognized as general problems of utilization of resources in the environmental system.

The First World Jamnyeology Conference

第1回 世界潛女學術會議

제1회 세계잠녀학술회의

Values of Women Divers and their Cultural Heritage **해양문명사에서의 잠녀의 가치와 문화적 계승**



Date: June 9-11, 2002

일 시: 2002년 6월 9일-11일

Place: Jeju Grand Hotel, Jeju City, Jeju Island, Korea,

장 소: 제주그랜드호텔

Hosted by Jeju Provincial Government

Organized by World Association for Island Studies (WAIS) and
the Institute for Peace Studies, Cheju National University

Sponsored by Korean National Commission for UNESCO

주 최: 제주도

주 관: 세계섬학회 · 제주대학교 평화연구소

후 원: 유네스코 한국위원회