

Home-based Production of the Southern Dialect Dong Minority Women in Rural Hunan, China

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Abstract : Since the economic reform in 1980s, many men and women of the southern dialect Dong minority have migrated to coastal cities for employment. Responding to the outgoing providers of the families, women, especially those at the middle age, resort to the informal home-based services and goods production for income generation. Homework, therefore, becomes a key economic strategy in supporting the household expenses in rural China, where formal employment is often inadequate for local women. This paper seeks to examine the intersection between gender and household strategy in the broader economic context of rural China. Based on the interviews and site survey in Tongdao Dong Autonomous County, the study analyses the variety of the home-based production activities, the experience of women in the production process, and the impact on familial relation and gender division of labor at home. The objective of this research is to advance the understanding of the informal economic landscape in the contemporary rural China, through which an alternative and possibly a more appropriate mode of development can be investigated.

Keywords : gender relation, home-based production, household strategy, informal economy, rural China, dong minority

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