

WOMEN IN NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Women in non-agricultural production in post-revolutionary China. Dissertation written in English by Marina Thorborg, Department of Economic History, University of Uppsala. This study investigates the employment and welfare policies on women workers in non-agricultural sector since 1949 in China.

This investigation is based mainly on Chinese sources such as official documents, conference papers, Chinese national and in particular, provincial newspapers.

A background chapter deals with women during the first industrialization period in Republican China 1911-1949. A short chapter (with tables) on women's participation in the non-agricultural labour force, 1930-1979, gives a background for comparison of policy changes over time. The main chapter treats extensively the employment policy on women in the non-agricultural sector. These policies are related to the ideology, the propaganda and the general economic changes in society. The final chapter focuses upon the welfare policy on women workers over time.

The main findings of this study are that employment policy on urban women shifted markedly over time, following shifts in economic conditions and general policy. Although the general ideology on women's liberation did not change over time, its interpretations in current propaganda did. During the period after the Employment Decisions by the central government July 25, 1952 until the Great Leap Forward in 1958, the propaganda in general encouraged women to stay at home. In 1958 the propaganda and the employment policy were reversed. The early 1960's saw a partial revival of the policies of the mid-1950's. The Cultural Revolution in 1966 brought about a complete break with these policies. The radical approach continued during the campaign against Confucius in the mid-1970's. In the post-Mao era Chinese society has experienced serious problems of unemployment. Women are encouraged to take whatever work they can get and are told to remain on the labour market, although there is urban unemployment. This shows a marked improvement over earlier policies. Women's right to work is no longer questioned.